National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

NL-339 (r. 88/04) c

Canada

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-55345-6

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TEACHING SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN: AN INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY

BY

GLENN D. IRIYE

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1989

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: GLENN D. IRIYE

TITLE OF THESIS: TEACHING SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN:
AN INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY

DEGREE: MASTER OF EDUCATION

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1989

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

.....G. Iriye.....
(Student's Signature)

.....190 Tudor Lane.....
(Student's permanent address)
Edmonton

Date: Sept. 29, 1989

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled TEACHING SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN: AN INTERPRETIVE INQUIRY

Submitted by GLENN D. IRIYE

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION.

.....
(Supervisor)

.....

.....

Date: Sept. 29, 1989

A DEDICATION

To my wife, Nancy, and daughter, Heather, for their understanding, support, guidance and keeping me in touch with the important things while I was completing this thesis;

and

In loving memory of my grandfather,
Harry Hirokichi Iriye.

ABSTRACT

This study uncovers teachers' understandings of special needs children employing conversation as a mode of research and reflecting upon the language in the conversations. A human science research stance allows the inquiry to place into question the way in which we see the handicapped children we teach. The basic assumptions and problem solving approach found in traditional research and borne out in the language of the teachers are themselves questioned in this study. Focusing upon the manner in which we speak of the child with special needs increases the potential to enhance our understanding of the handicapped and teaching practices.

A series of conversations with a group of teachers of special needs children form the base of this inquiry. "Teaching" and "children" are the research questions from which the conversations grow. The teachers discuss their experiences of teaching special needs children, and in doing so, speak about what is important for them in their teaching of special needs children. Further consideration of the topics of conversation leads to themes which are significant for seeing the teaching of handicapped children.

The language of special education is the language of positivism. The reliance upon behavioristic notions colors the manner in which we are able to relate to the special needs

child. Primary to this inquiry is the development of a critical awareness of assumptions which are woven into our understanding of special needs children. Through increasing our awareness of alternative interpretations we may also discover meanings which may increase the potential quality of life for the child with special needs, teaching, and for society as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the many who have helped in the realization of this thesis. Special thanks are due to:

The children and parents who inspired my graduate work;

The teachers who trusted and shared with me their experiences and thoughts about teaching special needs children;

Dr. Terry Carson, my advisor, for his encouragement, patience, and support;

Dr. Janis Blakey for her guidance and encouragement;

Dr. Larry Beauchamp for giving his valuable time and input;

Dr. Kathy Berry for first interesting me in graduate work and her moral support throughout the years;

Louise Bentley, my former principal, and Dianne Hinves for lending me some of their determination and for believing in me;

Ron McDonald for his excellent and efficient typing;

My family for their support;

Aunt Yukiye for her kindnesses over the years;

My wife, Nancy, for being there and helping me in too many ways to mention;

And finally, daughter Heather, for the reality and joy which she maintained in my life while writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

RAISING THE QUESTION 1

Introduction 1

Background to the Study 2

Encountering Special Needs Children: A Description 3

Terms of Significance to the Study 10

Description of Terms 10

Discussion of the Terms 12

Focus of the Study 14

Significance of the Study 15

Limitations of the Study 17

Organization of the Study 18

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE RELATED TO TEACHING SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN 21

Introduction 21

Public Beliefs About Handicapped Persons 23

Teachers and Their Students 28

Interpretive Studies 37

Situating My Study Within the Literature 48

Summary and Conclusion 50

CHAPTER III

CONVERSATION AS A FORM OF RESEARCH 51

Introduction 51

Research Approach 51

Interpretation 57

The Participants 58

Marj 61

Karen 62

Bev 63

Valerie 64

Conducting the Study 65

Interpreting the Conversations 68

Summary and Conclusion 70

CHAPTER IV

CONDUCTING THE CONVERSATIONS 72

Introduction 72

Conversation One 73

Behavior 78

Goals 80

Getting to Know the Child 83

Interpretation of the First Conversation 93

Conversation Two 96

The Role of Goals 96

Age 99

Priorities Which Guide Teaching Special Needs Children 100

Interpreting Communication Within Behavior . 104

Stimulus-Response 106
Learning to Interpret the Child 109
Interpretation of the Second Conversation 112
Conversation Three 114
Where Does One Begin With a Child? 115
Children Learning from Watching 119
The Negative Effect of Change 121
The Problems of Meeting Individual Student Needs 128
Interpretation of the Third Conversation 131
Preliminary Reflections on the Conversations . . . 133
Summary and Conclusion 134
CHAPTER V
REFLECTIONS ON THE CONVERSATIONS 135
Introduction 135
Marj 136
A Child's Abilities 137
Teaching/Learning 138
The Child's Awareness 141
Behavior 142
Novelty 144
The Teacher-Student Relationship 147
Summary 151
Karen 153
Seeing the Child 153
Building Upon the Child's Abilities 156
Generalization 161

The Child's Sensitivity to Teacher Emotions . 165
Summary 169
Bev 170
Qualities of Special Needs Children 171
Seeing the Whole Child 173
Teacher Responsibility 177
The Special Needs Child and Change 179
The Need for Perspective 181
Age and the Special Needs Child 183
Stimulus-Response 184
Summary 185
Valerie 186
Recognizing and Responding to a Child's Needs 187
Uncertainty About Her Interpretation of a Child 189
Concern About the Future of the Handicapped Child 190
Getting to Know a Child 193
Adapting Teaching to Meet the Needs of the Handicapped Child 196
Generalization 198
Summary 199
Dominant Themes 200
Learning as Climbing 204
Teaching as Inferring 205
Teaching as Building 206

Summary and Conclusion 207

CHAPTER VI

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS 209

Introduction 209

Reflecting on the Dominant Language of Teaching Special Needs Children in the Light of This Study 210

Teaching 212

Children 220

Teacher-Student Relationships 225

Re-Evaluating Our Stance in Teaching Special Needs Children 230

REFERENCES 232

CHAPTER ONE

RAISING THE QUESTION

Introduction

> I see you, and you see me. I experience you, and you experience me. I see your behaviour. You see my behaviour. But I do not and never have and never will see your experience of me. Just as you cannot "see" my experience of you. My experience of you is not "inside" me. It is simply you, as I experience you. And I do not experience you as inside me. Similarly, I take it that you do not experience me as inside you. (Laing, 1967, p. 15)

The purpose of this study is to uncover teachers' understanding of "dependent handicapped " children. When there appears to be such little feedback from a child and enormous developmental delays are evident, what do the teachers hope to achieve? It is the nature of retardation that there is a lack of feedback from a child, forcing the teacher to make certain assumptions in order to interpret what the child actually means.

This research attempts to explore how teachers see dependent handicapped children. Given the diversity of the teachers' education, experience and beliefs, they may interpret a given situation differently. Making these interpretations explicit allows us to see the manner in which

we come to understand special needs children. Teachers' talk about teaching provides the text to interpret.

Typically, the traditional research approach taken to gain an understanding of handicapped children is positivistic in nature. These approaches assume that there is a given state of normality. The job facing the teacher of a child with special needs is to remediate the deficits of a child to bring the child as close to the norm as possible. The focus then becomes the inabilities evident in the child. In this study I will contrast the meanings that teachers give to teaching special needs children with the traditional research literature.

Background to the Study

As a teacher, a rehabilitation practitioner, counsellor, and classroom aide in various programs and agencies, I had the opportunity to work with individuals with special needs. These individuals ranged from infants of six months of age to adults of thirty or forty years of age. I enjoyed working with these individuals and was puzzled when I encountered people who acknowledged that they could not work with, or even be in the company of, a person with special needs. Some of these unexpected admissions were from strangers. Some were from family members. Other comments were from people in the field of business, while some were from a social services

background. As a result of these comments, I began to question my own reasons for working with special needs persons and what I hoped to achieve. But I also began to wonder about the larger picture too.

In a sense, the way in which we teach children with special needs reflects the way in which we exist in the world with them and prepare them for their roles in life. Thus, the question which has emerged from my experience with special needs individuals is? What are the meanings of "children" and "teaching" for teachers of special needs children?

Encountering Special Needs Children: A Description

In the first encounters with a child who has special needs, the result is usually a guarded affair. Each encounter with such a child varies. Previous experiences with the handicapped are of little comfort, since each child is different and each context is unique. In the final analysis, the encounter is distilled into "me" facing "him/her," creating a personal dimension in which the possibility for communication exists. The interaction may be one-sided in terms of the feedback I receive from the child, but nonetheless, the process is between two human beings.

With the dominance of behaviorism in most areas of special education, it is only fitting that I acknowledge that through an awareness of behavior, on the part of both teacher

and students, many are taught to encounter and interpret handicapped children predominantly through attentiveness to what is observable, countable, or otherwise seen by the teacher. Laing's 1967) notion of experiencing also hints that there are limits to how I may come to understand someone else, and that these limits are confined to the behavioral indicators of me seeing someone do something in my presence. If there is no technique for me to achieve an understanding of you seeing me, complicated by the low intensity and refinement of you ability to communicate, the question becomes one of: How do I understand my experience of being with handicapped children? Or, in the context of my research, what is the meaning which handicapped children assume for teachers of the handicapped?

A clutter of children, splayed across vinyl smothered foam monolith-like ramps and cushions, are being encouraged to do their best to sit, crawl, roll, or otherwise control their bodies by kindly and expert voices and hands of teachers and physiotherapists. However, a striking feature of this obviously busy scene is that the activity is an adult activity. These children are manipulated and prompted into moving limbs, keeping heads erect, or in the use of contraptions of an undetermined genre. Each exercise is planned, prompted, and guided by adults. Each step is a part of the overall program designed to develop each child to his or her highest potential.

Adult voices are the only recognizable expressions of communication immediately apparent in this maze of exceptionality. The child-generated audibles that are heard are not suited for this context of school-aged children. This peculiarity may stem from both the nature of the sounds and the discrepancy from a "normal" area designated for play. Gurgles and shrieks are the only child-like vocalizations that arise. As a stranger, an outsider, I can remain aloof for a moment. Otherwise, the children I have to come to know so well are excused and their abnormal gurgles become automatically interpreted as meaningful. Without knowing the owners of the voices, it would be difficult to discern outbursts of joy from howls of frustration. It is a practised knowing which allows one to hear the distinctions between happiness and sorrow. Each child's patterns or methods of communication are unique. Listening and watching gestures, facial expressions and the pointing of eyes is much like maturing the palate: it takes time and effort.

A cursory survey of an area known as the "Central Play Area" reveals children with a wide degree and variety of handicap. One child, skull mis-shapen, body distorted to the limits of being recognizably human, whose behavior is that of an infant, who possessed eyes which, in spite of the apparent near-blindness, somehow "look right." When I pause to notice the eyes, there appears a sparkle, a quality of aliveness which is communicated in spite of the child's physical

appearance. In contrast, another child, seemingly "normal," wanders through the play area, apparently oblivious to anyone or anything.

Stopping at a respectable distance from the activity enmeshed area, my gaze comes to rest on one child. Her appearance is fragile. She lies on an unyielding looking rug, eyes fixed upon the ceiling, while an adult kneels beside her, cajoling reluctant toes, insteps, and ankles into resilient leather boots with protrusions of metal, intended to corral and support the calf and knees. I wonder if those braces are cold on the leg? My initial reservations have begun to fade, if only a little.

All the time I've been watching, the physiotherapist or teacher continues talking to the child with soothing mellowness, punctuated with playful exclamations. The worker's hands are obviously well practised and efficient; first coaxing a heel in there, tickling the ribs here, and stroking the child's expressionless face. The lack of animation in the child is underscored by the animated demeanor of the teacher, or physiotherapist. The actions and speech of the adult resemble a parent placating a newborn infant, letting the child know what is going on, what is going to be done, and somehow making it sound like enormous fun.

Meanwhile, the child's face hasn't changed. There are no cries, no fits of frustration at being made to do something, nor are there gleeful squeals, or attempts to help

make the task easier. No signs emanate from the girl, only passive acceptance. Blue eyes flecked with black, fixed upon the windows, the beams, the light fixtures, eyes which barely blink. Do her eyes see anything at all? Can those vacant eyes see? And if so, just what do they recognize, and what, or who, is absorbed without being identified through words or names that I can understand; or, does she need words or names to make sense of her world?

The eyes are as constant as the mouth from which a stream of drool flows and dampens the rug. An involuntary mental flinch at this realization leaves me hoping that no one has noticed an outward sign of my reaction of distaste at the saliva. Reassured that no one has, I purposefully shift to another station, as the worker dabs another child's cheek and neck with the driest section of a well-moistened Kleenex© tissue before she hoists the embraced mannequin upright.

The only time I can imagine such inactivity in a "normal" child of this age is when asleep. Such listless acceptance is not the hallmark of childhood. Usually, fingers would be covered with the nearest mud-puddle dabs of paint, or encrusted with peanut butter. Every moment would be etched with furious, purposeful activity. A trail of prints would be muraled on an inviting wall, smudges and scuff marks would be etched into the shiny shoe leather.

But this is not a "normal" setting. Here, sneakers, even when seen, are not caked from jaunts to the sandboxes and

playground outside. Where there should be brigades and legions of hardy child-loved litter with well-worn ears, or fading hues, there exists purposeful equipment poised to habilitate. Toys are expected to suffer from abuse and neglect. But the toy cash registers, stuffed animals, and vehicles which are employed here bear solemn testimony to repetitive and non-playful application of realism to a world of solemn utility. Here trucks are trucks, and drums are drums. These children, who are immobile against their will, are encouraged to mirror the life-world into which they can never be totally assimilated or suffer being tolerated rather than accepted.

Another child is slumped against the thickest end of an overgrown wedge of royal blue. He is held in a vertical fashion by two or three pillows on either side of him, feet stiffly protruding in a "V" from a weary, rounded torso befitting an old man of ninety or better. The chubby, but muscleless leges are thrust in an unyielding fashion, just as a "Barbie-doll" would be bent at the hips to attain a seated position. His arms are like fallen leaves draped upon the cushions at his sides, bespeaking of sinewless appendages. His head struggles like an unresponsive yo-yo, and for seconds at a time he can survey the world as it passes him by before his chin bobs to his terry-towel bibbed chest. Relentlessly, the cycle begins again. A short breather, and his head is on the rise again; this time to the remote exultations of a

physiotherapist on the incline of the wedge behind him. "Way to go-o-o Scot-teee!" at least she, manipulating another child in a roll down the ramp, notices his efforts. As a result, his toothy grin manages to stay upright just a little bit longer before he succumbs to gravity.

I sink to a crouch and find myself encouraging Scott to roll his head upwards one more time. And the misery I had envisioned before entering this unknown world shrinks for a moment while Scott struggles to see the owner of the new voice in his domain. No vacant eyes this time, there is a definite keenness, an awareness within. He knows something, and I can sense it, but how do I get at the voice, the thoughts, the experience which is locked within his awkward body?

My initial reticence in approaching this child dissipates slightly, lifting my spirit in minute increments. By now, the physical abnormalities of the child are less pronounced to my now accustomed eyes. The severity of the impairment of the child and the physical peculiarities have not been altered; but, the combined impact of these effects have somehow lessened and they do not weigh as heavily on my mind as before. The mis-shapen skull, apparently marrowless appendages, crooked fingers, and neanderthal forehead are not as distracting as before. Granted, the appearance of the child is still grimly luminescent in my mind; but, it is no longer the only thing of which I am aware.

Certainly, I would not like to admit to an immediate repulsion, based solely upon the physical appearances of these children, or upon the aberrant behavior which some of these children enact. Perhaps there is some primordial and involuntary twinge at seeing a body of a person, be it a child's or adult's, which does not conform to my established conception of the physical attributes of man, woman, or child; or the sight of a child of twelve drooling absently while encased in diapers. Such sights are not everyday occurrences for most people, and, as such, do command a reaction, some attention. But, reacting in a physical manner is admitting to the teachers, therapists, and the children that I am unable, if only for a moment, to see beyond the physical, beyond the impulsive or automatic behavior, to see the actual child, the person within.

Terms of Significance to the Study

Description of Terms

The following terms are used in the special education literature to describe the children referred to in this study:

Behavorially Disordered. This term refers to individuals who are identified as being disruptive, aggressive, or maladaptive; who require the imposition of structure (external limits, expectations, identification of methods), to function.

(1) An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
(2) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
(3) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal conditions.
(4) A general, pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
(5) A tendency to develop physical symptoms, pains, or fears associated with personal or school problems. (Bower, 1969, p. 423)

Dependent Handicapped. Dependent Handicapped (D.H.); or, Multiply Dependent Handicapped (M.D.H.), refers to children and adults who have been identified as mentally retarded, or developmentally delayed, who also possess physical impairments. Further, these individuals do not have the current capability for, nor are they expected to develop, the capacity to be self-sufficient.

> Those who are mentally impaired, unable to understand questions or give rational answers; those who are permanently bedfast; those who are confined to a chair; those who are incontinent; and those who cannot be left alone since they might harm themselves. (Moroney, 1981, p. 192)

Handicapped Children. Children who must learn to live with an impediment and/or a developmental delay in one or more areas.

> Handicapped children, are, by definition, unable to perform at appropriate age-grade levels with a regular educational curriculum in the same manner as other children. They do not fit the normative achievement and/or behavioral standards of the regular classroom. A modification of the expectations and/or the curriculum is required for these children. (Paul & Porter, 1981, p. 10)

Mental Retardation. The presence of a developmental delay due to known or unknown factors.

> According to the American Association on Mental Deficiency all three conditions--subnormal intellectual functioning, originating during the developmental period, and impairment of adaptive behavior--must be present for a person to be designated mentally retarded.
>
> The AAMD's definition is stated in functional terms--impairment in adaptive behavior and low level of intellectual functioning. This impairment my take the forms of: (1) maturational retardation as indicated by slowness in acquiring skills such as sitting, crawling, standing, walking, talking, habit training, and interacting with age peers; (2) deficiencies in learning, principally poor academic achievement; and (3) inadequate social adjustment, principally adult social and economic inadequacy. (Telford & Sawrey, 1981, p. 247)

Discussion of the Terms

The field of teaching children with special needs is aware of the effect of language on the teachers and on the students themselves. As a result, attention to the effect of language on teachers and students has had some liberalizing effect on the language used to talk about persons with special needs. The shift from words which have negative connotations to words which have positive implications about the child with special needs is evident in the field of teaching handicapped children.

There has been a progression from nineteenth century medical terms of such as "moron" to less defamatory labels like "mental retardation." Presently, though the term "mentally retarded" is still in use, it is interchangeable

with more positive descriptors. The intent of the new labels is to emphasize the abilities or the personal qualities of a person rather than dwell upon disabilities which he/she possesses. Although the current preferred phrase is "developmentally delayed," the term "mentally retarded" is still prevalent in the categorization, or naming of a handicapping condition for a specific child, and is still more commonly used by teachers and rehabilitation practitioners in informal situations. Some of the more liberal terms are "atypical," "exceptional," "challenged," "developmentally delayed," and "non-typical" are used in interchangeably to refer to mentally retarded children. In spite of the intended freeing of language found careful language used in the field of teaching children with special needs, the fact remains that the labels are still descriptors which attempt to define the students or their handicapping condition. The result is the creation of a new generation of jargon which carries with it encoded messages of what a teacher might expect when faced with an exceptional individual.

In attempting to precisely describe the special needs of a handicapped child the definition still falls short of an accurate portrait of the child. Even with the definition offered by Telford and Swarey (1981), there is a nebulous nature to the term "mental retardation." The definition focuses on major deficits usually associated with mental retardation; however, one may question the application of such

a definition to individual children and to teachers' experiences. Just as with the "normal" population, no two developmentally delayed persons are exactly alike. The commonalities they possess could be the same as the commonalities that you and I possess. Gart (1976) acknowledges the limitations of attempting to define mental retardation in specific terms. He says, "No one seems to know for sure, and although you describe one or two retarded people that you have known or met, your understanding of the word is very vague" (p. 112). Though we may describe handicapped persons with whom we are acquainted, we know that our description of mental retardation is incomplete. The quantitative descriptors with which we talk of such people lacks something which is an important part of our understanding of handicapped persons.

Focus of the Study

In this study I want to contrast the behaviorist approach to teaching special needs children, which dominates the research and teacher education in the field, with the experience of actually teaching these children. By engaging teachers of handicapped children in conversation to inquire about the nature of teaching handicapped children there are several questions which allow access to the experience of teaching special needs children. What is a child having

special needs like for a teacher? What does it mean to teach such a child?

Significance of the Study

To date, most of the research into working with special needs children relies upon positivistic approaches. In the traditional mode of inquiry, the questions regarding what and how to teach a handicapped child demand explanations. Traditional understanding is based upon posing a problem and providing a satisfactory solution. Questioning which fits this problem-solving mode is closed questioning because this line of questioning places limits on answers. The importance is placed upon identifying and isolating variables which are effective or ineffective in educating handicapped children.

Traditional modes of inquiry in teaching special needs children have regarded these children as having problems which need to be solved. Thus, any questions pursued are seen and analyzed in a problem solving mode. When applied to research questions about special needs children, several contentious assumptions are made through this line of inquiry. First, the focus of the inquiry is on the disabilities present in the handicapped child. Though the latest developments in the development of awareness of language used with special needs children focuses upon abilities and working through strengths, a strong tendency to see the child in terms of being

incomplete. Completeness is held to be a state by which everyone is measured. Second, what is "normal" does not come into question. It is assumed that the true standard is that which is "normal" and that deviations from this are to be remediated. The person with special needs is seen as being "abnormal" and that deviations from this are to be remediated. The person with special needs is seen as being "abnormal" and steps to rectify this situation must be undertaken. Thus, any inquiry into teaching special needs children which follows the traditional problem solving mode of research already places the handicapped child at a disadvantage.

This study seeks to explore not only what teachers of special needs children see as important in relation to the children they teach and what they teach, but this study also seeks to expand upon our understanding of how we interpret the meaning of handicapped children in our lives. To accomplish this, the initial organizing framework is built upon my research interest into the meaning of "children" and "teaching." The interpretive process does not rely strictly upon seeking an answer or a set of answers which may be applied to a given situation. Instead, the process seeks to describe the experience of teachers and make the meanings of that experience explicit.

Through uncovering of the participants understandings of "children" and "teaching" we are able to identify what is of importance to those directly working with special needs

children. The assumption being, how the teachers see children, or how they see teaching, will effect the manner in which they relate to children or to teaching. Once we make explicit the notions which guide and effect teaching of special needs children, then measures to improve educational practices may occur.

Limitations of the Study

This is an interpretive study. Interpretive studies attempt to make clear the meanings of those involved in the study. Meanings evolve from experience and reflection upon that experience. Experience is always mediated by beliefs and preconceptions. By making meanings explicit, the underlying beliefs become open to examination. I attempt to make explicit how I have come to interpret what is said. I acknowledge my own beliefs and attempt to examine how the participants' beliefs allow them to see something in a particular way.

Rather than employing the "empirical-analytic orientation" of inquiry, this study represents "a situational-interpretive orientation" towards understanding teaching special needs children (Aoki, 1985, p. 8). The emphasis of this study is to place the teachers of special needs children in relationship with the children they teach by talking about teaching these children. As a result of this inquiry,

meanings which are of importance to teachers of special needs children will be made clear.

Organization of the Study

This study centers upon understanding the meanings of "children" and "teaching" in the lives of teachers of special needs students. By seeking to understand teachers' meanings, the way in which we approach dependent handicapped children may also be improved. With this in mind, Chapter One presents the research question as a way of seeing handicapped children beyond existing limitations imposed by applying positivistic problem solving to the context of the special needs classroom.

Chapter Two surveys some of the existing literature in the field of teaching special needs children. It supplies a brief historical perspective of how persons with special needs have been seen and contrasts this with the present day orientation towards helping children with special needs. I also review a number of studies related to teaching special needs children. These have usually analyzed teacher attitudes. In contrast with the traditional studies there is also a growing body of literature which deals with personal experiences of having special needs. Some of these will be reviewed.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology employed in the study. It explores conversation as a form of research.

Following Gadamer (1977), conversation presents a mode of research through which a question of life and the way that we live with one another in the world may be pursued. An interpretive process is necessary to make sense of our experience. Chapter Three describes the application of hermeneutical approach to conversation.

Chapter Four presents the reconstructed conversations with four teachers of special needs children. It identifies the topics of conversation. Beginning with my questions about children and teaching, the talk explores some of the main ideas which are central to the teacher-participants' understandings of these questions. The conversations are presented in reconstructed form attempting to maintain a degree of fidelity with the context and the intent of what was said by the participants. Topics arise and are identified for further discussion in the next chapter.

Chapter Five extends the process of interpretation, uncovering underlying themes of the conversation. The post-conversation interpretation in this chapter allows for extending the meanings found in the initial interpretation of the conversations.

In Chapter Six, the themes are examined again in relation to the dominant theoretical literature. The study indicates that the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students, which tends to be neglected by the literature is

still very much a factor in the meaning of teaching special needs children.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE RELATED TO TEACHING SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Introduction

Chapter One contextualizes my research interest and the questions guiding this study. In Chapter Two, the boundaries established by pursuing understanding handicapped persons based upon findings of objectivist science are questioned. Also included is a survey of literature which extends the possibility of understanding the handicapped person beyond the imposed limits of positivism. I explore the alternatives to the objectivist view through autobiographies, personal accounts by those who live with handicapped children, and phenomenological studies.

This chapter is concerned with showing the emphasis given the positivistic attitude prevalent in traditional research regarding teaching handicapped persons. Traditional research is concerned with listing tangibles. By isolating the variables involved in teaching special needs children, the assumption is that the variables are open to manipulation. The objectives are to assign a value to a variable and measure

the outcome or the influence achieved in educating the handicapped. Therefore, there has been a research emphasis upon the identification of beliefs and attitudes about the mentally handicapped. Since traits are also seen as being manifested concretely, the traditional research mode has focused upon the identification of teacher traits which enable a teacher to work with special needs persons. Traditional research imposes a problem solving approach upon the context of teaching special needs children by seeking verification for what is taught and how something is taught. These studies lack a sense of sensitivity towards the questions which are opened by teaching handicapped children.

Individual biographies and phenomenological accounts are able to show the personal understandings of handicapped persons. In addition, the consideration of parenting or being a sibling to a person with special needs offers a broader foundation for examining a pedagogic relationship with a handicapped child. Examination of relationships between parents and siblings provides us with further impetus to reconsider how we have come to define and relate to handicapped persons. The autobiographies and relationships begin to point towards the need for something other than simplistic reason. Widening the scope of interest to include these studies enhances our sensitivity about handicapped persons. The increased sensitivity allows for seeing the possibilities for further interpretation. These interpretive

studies add another dimension to the project of understanding the meanings handicapped children assume for us.

Positivistic methods which remain concrete and logical have dominated the teaching of special needs children. But, teaching special needs children is a human task. As such, it is full of emotion. Being with someone with a handicapping condition involves pain and struggle. At times it is not so much what is seen as what is felt, or what is hoped, or what is as yet unseen. Teaching handicapped children deals with both what is displayed by the child and what is hidden. Rationality and our ties to what is seeable and explainable are not enough to rely totally upon them for the basis of our teaching special needs children.

Public Beliefs About Handicapped Persons

To some extent, handicapped individuals have always been a part of the general population, regardless of the specific society or culture. The treatment of different people varied from culture to culture, irrespective of the level of technological development of the society. Some primitive societies have reportedly instituted practices, such as infanticide, in dealing with people who are handicapped; while even "advanced" societies have devised radical solutions to the "problem" of exceptional individuals, as evidenced by Nazi Germany. The severity, or the level of acceptance of those

who are identified as different and their subsequent treatment has varied. In Canada, the Dependent Handicapped Act of Alberta was amended in 1974 to eliminate the sterilization clause which called for the automatic sterilization of a mentally handicapped person (Kinkaide, 1974). A particular belief about a person with special needs is not dependent upon the civilized nature of a society. Given a group of people, there is apt to be a wide range of understanding regarding those who are perceived as different, and a wider range of opinions about what can be done with them.

Societal beliefs influence the manner in which special needs persons are seen and educated. In the early and middle nineteenth century, small residences or group homes were common in providing service delivery to persons with special needs. However, Flynn and Nitsch (1980) note that in the 1800's, descriptions used to refer to handicapped persons follow a medical model. The term "idiot" comes from the British medical model of the early nineteenth century. The pervasiveness of the medical model shaped thinking regarding handicapped persons. The focus was on the abnormal appearance or behavior of a "patient." Employing "normality" as a standard for measurement and comparison was never questioned.

> Idiots have been improved, educated and even cured. Not 1 in 1,000 has been entirely refractory to treatment, not 1 in 100 who has not been made more happy and healthy. More than 30% have been taught to conform to moral and social laws and rendered capable of order, of good feeling and of working like a third of a man. More than 40% have become capable of ordinary transactions of life under

> friendly controls, of understanding moral and social abstractions, or working like two-thirds of a man; and 25%-30% have come nearer and nearer the standard of manhood until some of them will defy the scrutiny of good judges. when compared with ordinary young men and women (National Institute of Mental Retardation. [N.I.M.R.] 1977, p. 80)

Handicaps of all types were "treated" as afflictions which could be remedied with the proper treatment or scientific breakthrough. Not only were the terms borrowed from medicine, but the implication of an ultimate cure for a malady such as mental retardation was also present. The ultimate cure of course was to restore the disabled person to as close to a "normal" life as possible.

The late 1800's saw the beginnings of the shift from group homes to large institutions whose trustees and officers became responsible for the care and training of the handicapped (Wolfensberger, 1972). Wolfensberger believes that the shift of the community-based family-centered residential and care model to a huge economizing institutional model also marked a shift in societal beliefs of the day. Pity and charity became the cornerstones of the institutional era. In addition, handicapped persons were thought to be a product of parental sin.

If things had not deteriorated badly enough by the late 1800s, the early 1900s brought to the forefront the "menace" of mental retardation. Though this attitude was in existence earlier, it was intensified by sociologist Henry Goddard. In Goddard's (1912) book, The Kallikak Family, and similar books

by other authors, the general public was fed misconceptions about the handicapped. Poverty, crime, and mental retardation were linked to explain the increasing presence of societal ills (N.I.M.R., 1977). The resulting "eugenic movement" sought to remove all persons considered to be mentally deficient from society through institutionalization of the offender.

Although today, through the efforts of interested individuals, nurses, doctors, and educators the handicapped person is no longer seen as a threat to society. A humane attitude and the movement towards a better understanding of the person with special needs has changed the way in which society treats a handicapped person. Today, the N.I.M.R. suggests a continuum ranging from rejection, to charity, to emergent possibility.

1. Mentally retarded persons are seen as sub-human organisms, possessing less than full humanity and rights.
2. Mentally retarded persons are seen as a menace to society, to normal people, and themselves.
3. Mentally retarded persons are seen as an object of pity, suffering from some condition for which they should not be held responsible or accountable.
4. Mentally retarded persons are seen as a burden of charity.
5. Mentally retarded persons are seen as holy innocents, or eternal children. This and similar views place the handicapped person either above mankind, as a "saint" serving a divine purpose in life, or the "eternal children" who never grow up.
6. Mentally retarded persons are seen as developing persons. (N.I.M.R., 1977, p. 3)

In order to protect the non-handicapped population from

handicapped from themselves, there have been attempts at legislation. In the most liberal interpretation of the legislation are fundamental beliefs regarding the sanctity of life and the rights of individuals, regardless of handicap. Regardless of changes in legislation, beliefs cannot be mandated. How one sees the mentally handicapped reflects a personal interpretation based upon one's knowledge, experience, and values. Societal values and mores directly influence the personal interpretation as well, but the interpretation remains largely a personal one. The categories established by the N.I.M.R. are, to a large extent, a framework upon which most beliefs about persons with special needs may be placed.

The beliefs of non-handicapped children of around the same age are important. First, a young child is apt to reflect what is thought in the home, or by significant adults such as teachers. And second, as children grow, they take active places in society and may have a direct effect upon teaching special needs persons, or making decisions effecting them.

The traditional objectivist research regarding the level of acceptance of the handicapped by non-handicapped children finds that social acceptance of mentally retarded students is lower than the acceptance of non-retarded children. Researchers have examined several factors in an attempt to discern the root of acceptance or rejection of special

students by non-handicapped students. These factors have included: socio-economic status (SES), adequate preparation of the school, personal characteristics of the special needs students, or the quality of exposure to special needs children (Corman & Gottlieb, 1977; Heintz, 1974; Jones, 1972; and Gottleib, 1974). Preparation of the teachers and students in the school has also proven inconclusive in determining how best to facilitate the acceptance of special needs students. In schools where much preparation is done prior to the introduction of special needs students, there are conflicting results. At this time, the factors thought to facilitate the interactive process between the handicapped and the non-handicapped cannot be positively identified.

Teachers and Their Students

The positivist perspective is prevalent in the studies regarding teachers and students. Again the focus remains on the identification of tangibles which describe acts of teaching and learning, the assumption being that given a comprehensive enough list, a formula for teaching special needs children may be derived. Some of the components for the formula are considered here.

A problem facing teachers of the special needs students is one of conveying meaning without attaching a stigma to the student, even if the stigma is acted upon unconsciously by the

teacher. Labelling, or categorization, offers teachers a form of short-hand in which the general behavior and characteristics of a child may be communicated quickly. Further, it is usually necessary to apply labels to obtain funding for a child; but, once the child is placed into an educational funding category, the damage is done and the label attaches a stigma which cannot be ignored by the teacher (Church, 1980). However, Gaar and Plue (1983) suggest that teachers favor separate categories such as "mentally retarded" or "learning disabled," for students, though the reasons for such approval are not clear.

Corman and Gottlieb (1977) and Jones (1972) also considered appearance as being a significant factor in exchanges between a handicapped and a non-handicapped person. A special needs student's level of dress and deportment might be lower than a non-handicapped student, but no significant correlation has been established. Contravention of informal peer dress codes by the child with special needs is not yet a proven factor in discriminatory behavior.

Continuing in a positivistic vein, Aloia (1975) contends that the physical appearance of the handicapped individual and the label applied to the individual are significant factors in a non-handicapped person's judgment regarding a person being normal or handicapped. Using photographs and descriptive categories or labels, he sought impressions from various pre-service teachers. Of course the labels did not

always correspond to the child in the photograph. He showed that the forming of a judgment about the normality of a person is important in that it shows a differentiation between normal and abnormal. He contends that discrimination was a result of judgments regarding physical attractiveness and labels. The abnormal would be treated in a different manner than the normal.

The scientific method is also applied to identifying and labelling something as subjective as teacher attitudes. Through positivistic studies, it has been determined that teacher attitudes and behavior influence the acceptance of the handicapped child by other non-handicapped children and the quality of interaction between these two types of students (Foley, 1979; Snyder, Apolloni & Cooke, 1977; and Schmidt & Nelson, 1969). The teacher may figure as being the determining factor in the acceptance or rejection of handicapped students by non-handicapped students. If a teacher has reservations about having a special needs student in his/her classroom or school, the students may pick up non-verbal and verbal cues as to the teacher's position and act in a similar fashion. The beliefs and practices of the teacher directly effects the beliefs and practices of his/her students.

A teacher who has a positive attitude about working with mentally handicapped students provides a different experience for special needs children, non-handicapped peers, and staff

than does a teacher who is hesitant to work with the mentally handicapped. Holman and Jorgenson (1971), in a study involving home economics student teachers, found that a majority of respondents wish to avoid personal contact with special needs persons. It must be kept in mind that enforced contact or training could produce the opposite effect from that which is intended.

Meanings given to the handicapped by their teachers sometimes serve to misrepresent the handicapped child. Carroll and Reppucci (1978) describe three effects which may arise when children are labelled according to disability. These are

> 1. Professionals attach different relative meanings to clinical labels.
> 2. Teachers and mental health workers may respond differently to labelled children.
> 3. Professional groups may have different relative responses to common clinical labels.
>
> (p. 373)

The net result of labelling may include not only the effect of stigmatization, but of differential treatment as a direct result of the labelling process. Certainly, it may appear simpler to identify and label different problems; but, children may become entangled in a maze of characteristics and behaviors generally associated with the label, and not for the characteristics and behaviors they actually possess or demonstrate.

One of the most prevalent beliefs regarding teachers of the handicapped is that they possess some innate,

exceptionally high level of patience. Although this may be true, this statement remains unsubstantiated by any current research. Teachers of the mentally handicapped may be thought to have a higher level of morale. But Jones (1969) found no significant difference involving the level of morale between teachers of non-handicapped students and teachers of educable mentally retarded students.

Another positivistic study sought to measure teachers and stress. Fimean (1983) attempted to measure emotional, behavioral, and physiological manifestations of stress in special education teachers and regular teachers. He found that though teachers of the mentally retarded had a significantly lower score on a number of stress source variables than did their regular education counterparts, they did score higher in the stress manifestation measure. Special education reduces the number of stress variables, but the intensity of stress rises disproportionately. Fimian found the only significant difference that he could accurately report was that special educators were more likely to use alcohol to reduce stress.

Another belief about teachers of the handicapped is that they are more nurturing or supportive by nature. Skrtic, Sigler, and Lazar (1974) researched the question of nurturing and extremely impaired special needs children. Pursuing the nurturing assumption, the researchers found that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers of the

retarded, or between levels of nurturing behavior and particular special needs students. In fact, the researchers found no difference between the care given by either female or male teachers. Neither gender has a monopoly on nurturing behavior. But there appears to be a tendency for teachers to react more favorably to a child who is engaged in desirable activities, regardless of whether or not he/she is handicapped or non-handicapped. The teacher is more likely to support and nurture a child with good work habits who does not engage himself/herself in behavioral disruptions within the classroom. This would support Copeland and Weissbrod's (1976) findings that the child, handicapped or not, who is behaving in a desirable manner, will be preferred by teachers. Further, if the child is mentally handicapped, he/she will be seen as being less retarded if well-behaved.

In the positivist literature, the behavior of a handicapped child is related to the question of what to teach a child with developmental delays. Schmidt and nelson (1969) and Carri (1985) see a shift from the concerns of academic achievement to the practicalities involving social and emotional adjustment. Personal development is a priority with the handicapped child. Subject matter takes a back seat to the learning of functioning skills.

The previous studies have found that to some extent teacher attitudes are important in determining educational experiences for special needs children, and that attitudes

play an important role in a child's progress. Further, it has been suggested that teachers tend to be less positive about a handicapped child's ability in some areas than parents. Mealor and Richmond (1980) suggest that this discrepancy is due to parents having more exposure and information to a child's behavior, and that the behaviors occur with more frequency at home because it is a natural setting rather than in a contrived, testing environment.

Bridging the gap between parents and professionals offers an interesting, though somewhat dispassionate voice which attempts to speak for parents of handicapped children. Through interviews and case studies with parents of handicapped children, supplemented by observations and interviews with ten teachers of the mentally handicapped. Jacobs (1969) outlines several major shortcomings of special education. Aside from addressing parental concerns about their children and their future, Jacobs offers three observations which directly relate to teachers. The first of his findings indicates "the lack of standardization of teaching methods and goals," (p. 69) as being detrimental to the special needs child's educational experience. A second point of relevancy regards the training of special education teachers. He states:

> It is perhaps not surprising that the author found no indication whatever, from his observations of teachers in classroom situations, that as a group those teachers who had had the benefit of "special

> education" courses were not any "better" than those who had not. (Jacobs, 1969, p. 78)

Thirdly, he goes on to say that "playing it by ear" and "it's good if it works" are the phrases which depict the major ways in which teachers of the handicapped perceive the project of teaching (Jacobs, 1969, p. 133).

The findings of his study are interesting and provide some insight into the nature of teaching handicapped children. Perhaps "playing it by ear" is a natural interpretation of the mandate of individualization for special education classrooms. Although Jacobs attaches negative connotations to the phrase, that is, it serves as an excuse for poor instructional approaches, it may also be the case that individualization of educational experiences naturally leads to an eclectic view of students, curricula, and methods. In order to comply with the spirit of individualization, perhaps what appear to be random educational programs might in fact be highly structured, highly rigorous ways in which teachers employ all of their experience and education to serve the needs of each student.

Baum (1972) finds that teachers believe that they have the skills necessary to evaluate instructional materials. Their experience with different materials and children prepares them for evaluating the effectiveness of materials used in the classroom. Along similar lines, Carri (1985) finds because of the need for teachers working with more than

one area of exceptionality there is a need for the teacher to be "proficient in a greater variety of instructional and methodological procedures" (p. 417). The broad experiential base, teacher-training, and inservice procedures support the teacher in achieving the necessary level of proficiency.

Beliefs and attitudes of a person confronting a mentally handicapped child color the manner in which the child is seen. They also affect the way in which the handicap is seen. Positivistic research identifies and organizes the meaning of handicapped children along conceptual lines which rely upon concrete elements. Their meaning is made available through analyses and proofs. Traits, beliefs, attitudes, feelings, and actions remain variables which need only be plugged into the correct formulae in order to come to an understanding of teaching special needs children.

Thus far, the considerations have focused upon the positivistic notions of what non-handicapped persons "think" or "feel" about handicapped persons, or upon what non-handicapped persons think are traits for persons teaching handicapped students. But, we do not yet have an accurate idea of what the handicapped think of themselves or of the non-handicapped. A growing body of literature which focus upon interpretive studies and personal accounts is responsible for allowing for an understanding of handicapped children beyond the scope of positivistic problem solving.

Interpretive Studies

The inadequacies of the objectivist studies have given rise to the development of a more human science in the quest for understanding handicapped persons. As a result, the first-hand accounts of handicapped persons, and of those who live with handicapped persons have received increased importance in extending our understanding of teaching handicapped children. The benefits resulting from autobiographical accounts of handicapped individuals allow us to see the influence of societal beliefs and values in the lives of those with special needs. The inclusion of the personal revelations of persons with special needs and effects of these persons on the lives of individuals close to them allow for going beyond the naming of specific variables. Parents and siblings of handicapped children can begin to point towards alternatives not previously considered as important in outlining our understanding of teaching handicapped children. Phenomenological accounts are significant additions to this growing body of literature. The phenomenological accounts included in this study point towards the constraints under which we place handicapped persons. Through examining the limits by which we allow ourselves to see the handicapped person, we begin to "see" beyond the conventional limits of understanding set by positivistic thought. We allow ourselves the option to encompass other

possibilities, to listen to other ways in which we see handicapped children. In doing so, we allow the questions concerning teaching handicapped children to be raised.

Personal Accounts by Those Who Live With Handicapped Children. There are a number of articles and books dealing with a handicapped person from either a parent's perspective or a sibling's point of view. Emma Pivato's (1985) collection of letters, articles, poems, and stories deal mostly from parental reflections and observations. Nicola Schaefer (1982) and Kathryn Talwar (1983) also write from a parent's perspective. Schaefer writes of her daughter's struggle with the multiple impairments of cerebral palsy and mental retardation and the impact upon her family and the community-at-large, while Talwar submits a letter to her son who also suffers from multiple handicaps (quadriplegic cerebral palsy; blindness; and mental retardation). The contributions of books and articles such as these provide a personal dimension to the understanding of handicapped persons from the point of view of one who lives with them.

In Does She Know She's There?, Schaefer (1982) presents her life with her daughter, Catherine, in a realistic, warm, and sometimes humorous manner. Despite the overwhelming considerations involved with Cath's physical, emotional, and educational needs, Schaefer presents her story as the account of the complete family. Perceptions, observations, hypotheses, and reflections of a mother, as well as the

effects of Cath on other family members and the other members' effect on Cath combine to allow the reader the pleasure and privilege of a glimpse into an absorbing personal journey. Since Catherine has limited expressive modes or capabilities open to her, Schaefer has empathetically tried to understand her daughter through interpreting her actions and her silences. All the while, Schaefer is educating the general public about the potential, rights, and needs of the handicapped.

The collective significance of these contributions is one of developing a sensitive awareness of handicapped individuals. They explore the differences experienced by parents of handicapped children. Expectations are modified to adapt the child's abilities and needs. But, there is still the need for someone who cares to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and who speaks of the relationship between a parent and a handicapped child. For teachers of handicapped children there is a responsibility to listen to the parent who has developed the empathy and sharing which bonding allows.

On behalf of the handicapped who are unable to communicate, we rely upon the accounts of parents to give us an idea of what it is like to be handicapped. Listening to accounts of what it is like to be handicapped or what it is like to live with and be responsible for a handicapped person allows us to extend our understanding of the manner in which

we approach people with handicaps.

Autobiographies. An exceptional few handicapped persons have been able to share their story with us without having to rely upon the interpretations of parents or siblings. They are able to show us what lies beyond the trauma of disability and to share with us their feelings and beliefs. These autobiographical accounts may be the most important contribution to developing an increased questioning about the way in which we see handicapped persons. These rare accounts give voice to what is silent in the majority of the handicapped population. However, most are too profoundly handicapped to be able to tell their experience of sharing the world with us.

In a unique contribution, Sondra Diamond (1981), herself physically handicapped as a result of a form of cerebral palsy, discloses the impact that cerebral palsy has had on her family and herself. She is afflicted with a severe form a cerebral palsy and has accomplished much professionally, academically, emotionally, and physically. As a psychologist who has a personal understanding of being handicapped, she offers parents, teachers, health professionals, social workers, and others suffering from cerebral palsy first-hand impressions. Although we cannot directly experience cerebral palsy, Diamond has allowed us to share in her experience.

Diamond establishes that there are indeed universals in the world. Like non-handicapped persons, handicapped persons

do have similar feelings and needs. In addressing the disabled person's right to risk, to be held accountable as a person, she says "All of these expectations made us aware that there were people in the world other than ourselves--people with feelings and needs just like our own" (Diamond, 1981, p. 43). Not only does she remind us of our own responsibilities to view disabled persons as people, Diamond also instills the basic essence of the human spirit to which we must all respond.

Nolan (1987) echoes the necessity for seeing unexpressed abilities of the handicapped. He is another author within an uncooperative body as a result of cerebral palsy. Nolan's autobiographical account is a moving and emotionally-laden story. By describing his incredible struggles he lets the reader see what it is like to be on the other side of a handicapping condition like cerebral palsy.

The inability to communicate is frustrating. A good part of Nolan's life has been spent without the luxury of being able to communicate. He allows us to see that even without the presence of speech, conscious thought was and is present. Prior to learning how to type, he encounters people who grossly underestimate his abilities and treat him as if he cannot understand. Fortunately, he also has more positive encounters. Able to communicate through eye-pointing and inaccurate gestures, it takes time for people to get to know him and to understand his meanings. After registering in a

regular school, he shows how important it is for teachers to make assumptions regarding the student. Casey, a prospective teacher offers the boy a tour of his new school. The teacher assumes that the boy in the wheelchair has a natural and normal curiosity about his new surroundings. "Feelings for the young boy's curiosity, Jim Casey asked and answered questions that he felt might be racing through Joseph's mind" (NOlan, 1987, p. 17). Nolan also shows how the acceptance of other students is shown in their attempts at understanding him. He describes how his assistants and friends gradually begin to understand his mode of communication. "Carefully he noted students' burgeoning grasp of gesticulated communication, hackneyed imagination trod new terrain, lifting meaning from sighs, eyes and babbled cries" (p. 26).

Nolan's story shows a fundamental level of interpretation at work. He shows how interpretation of his verbal and gestural expression modes of communication, though limited, are able to convey meaning to the initiated. He also emphasizes the need to interpret his silences as meaningful. Though not able to openly communicate, he shows that in a given situation, his mind has the same questions. His is the story of a struggle for understanding: understanding the world around him, and pleading to be understood himself.

In both Diamond's and Nolan's accounts there is a call for handicapped persons to be understood by non-handicapped persons. Communication may be non-existent. The handicapped

person may not be able to share their thoughts. But, locked within is still a need to be understood. Theirs is a plea to be accepted and treated as a person. In the absence of verbal communication, there is a call for the teacher of a handicapped child to go beyond narrow interpretations of the actions of a handicapped child. Broad interpretations of the child go beyond gestures or behavior. The teacher interpretations of the child should also include the attempt to empathetically respond to the world as the child might without the handicapping condition.

Phenomenological Studies. When the person with special needs cannot speak for himself/herself, there is another way of accessing his/her world. A phenomenological study captures experience rather than being concerned with the way "we conceptualize, categorize, or theorize about" the experience (vanManen, 1984a, p. 2). A phenomenological account does not present an autobiography which sees life from a particular perspective and which explains intentions. Rather, phenomenologically explores the experience which is made available through encountering a phenomenon. Through sifting the layered experience of teaching handicapped children, phenomenology has the ability to provide insights into the ways in which we see handicapped children.

The two phenomenological studies reviewed in this chapter extend the reach of our understanding to include "that which is or was accessible to others and might thus potentially be

accessible to me if I were not here but there" (Schutz, 1978, p. 136). These studies offer an entry point into a different understanding of encounters with handicapped persons. Both point towards the possibilities which might grow from thoughtful consideration of the instance or the relationship.

Stilma (1986) portrays the handicapped through tracings of life allowing the handicapped to enter our consciousness by focusing attention upon them in a thoughtful manner. She accomplishes this through a reduction of living layers of experience. Her writing illuminates the multiplicity of possibilities which lie within the fragment of life.

Aunt Josie

For months on end they had worked for it.
The camping trip was a rising sun. Beaming and chock full of promises.
Cutting wood outside, cooking, eating, sleeping in a tent, making camp fires.
Then one evening Karl did not return.
The excursion into the big city clearly had been too tempting.

They boys knew all about it.
Gone abroad . . .
A good heist . . .
Spent the loot the next few days . . .
But the morning papers contained no item that could be linked to Karl's doings.

In the afternoon he returned.
Where had he been?
At Aunt Josie's.
Who might Aunt Josie be, then?
A new girlfriend.
Where had he found her?
In the evening, on the streets, at a corner, downtown.
How?
Well, easy. She had said, "You want some love? Come with me."
So . . . the boys understood . . . a . . .

Uh-hun, right.
And she had, . . .?
Uh-huh, sure.
And he had . . .?
Sure, that too.

The counsellors at the institution talked to him in private.
"I'm going again. As often as I can," Karl said right up front.
Why? they asked him.
Had the man in him suddenly awakened, they asked themselves?
But . . . he was only sixteen, this quiet little Karl.
Why then?
Quietly and simply he explained.
"It's nice and warm there.
There's this gorgeous rug on the floor.
And the coffee is always ready."
Then he stopped for a moment, as if the next part of the explanation had to be composed very carefully.
His look had no hidden corners.
As open as the spring sky.
"She said, 'I love you.'
Can I go back to the boys now?"
They said, "Go ahead. Goodbye, Karl."
And remained silent. (pp. 55-56)

In this example of her writing, she allows the different interpretations to be raised. Different groups of people are prepared to place their own interpretation upon Karl's excursion. Even after he has explained himself, the questioners are still interpreting his responses from their own point of view. The counsellors' act of asking Karl shows that they had already answered the questions for themselves. Additionally, because Karl "has no hidden corners" the counsellors find it difficult to interpret such openness because they cannot conceive of expressing it themselves. The power of this example lies in its ability to show the

possibilities for different interpretations. It also generates more questions than it answers. The consideration of the possibilities opens the question of understanding handicapped persons.

Heather Berkeley (1985) phenomenologically examines the relationship with her handicapped sister and the relationship's bearing upon herself. Berkeley attempts to explore the structural implications and impositions ascribed to the handicapping condition. Berkeley also re-analyzes her relationship with her profoundly retarded sister, finding within herself a voice which seeks to speak for her sister, who is unable to speak on her own behalf. Not only does Berkeley convey a sense of injustice and the extent to which entrenched societal roles are evident, but she also accomplishes her task in a phenomenological and hermeneutic fashion.

Berkeley's phenomenological inquiry into the layers of life surrounding the handicapped and those around the handicapped moves from the general to the specific, and back again with ease. In Mental Retardation as Social Identity, Berkeley (1985) enters the realm of the hermeneutic, a direct result of her ability to recognize the experiences which have allowed her to attain her current perspective. The hermeneutic is revealed by her posing of possibilities, of seeing different ways to interpret her relationship with her sister. She accomplishes this not in a form of mourning of

her sister's inabilities; rather, she challenges the inadequacies of "normality" which are brought into question through knowing her sister, and accepting her sister as a person in her own right.

> Whereas my retarded sister may have lacked the capacity to become a competent speaker, I lacked the capacity to use whatever competencies I had developed as a speaker to articulate to myself and to others what this relationship had meant to me, how it had marked and moved and formed me as an individual, and what moral demands it had placed upon me as her sister and as a human being. Thus, if she could have been faulted for her incapacity to tell me who she was, what she needed, her place in the world, I could have been more deeply faulted for my incapacity to generate an identity for her, myself, and our relation. Such was our mutual inarticulateness. (Berkeley, 1985, p. 40)

"Mutual inarticulateness" notwithstanding, the interpretation most often ascribed to the handicapped is in the passive tense. Given the exploration of the beliefs about the handicapped in this chapter, perhaps it is possible to assert that the handicapped are engaged in generating their own identities. But, in order to see the identity of the handicapped, the non-handicapped must amplify and interpret the identity of a handicapped person into something understandable.

The phenomenological studies presented here open questions regarding the way in which we deal with special needs children. These studies do not supply convenient answers to instances or relationships. Instead they depict ways in which understanding is achieved. Understanding the

handicapped person is an interpretive task which entails understanding the subtleties and different points of view. The counsellor has a different intent and different interpretation than does a peer. The sister comes to understand her relationship with her handicapped sister by seeing how the handicap has effected the relationship and how going beyond the handicapping condition is possible.

Situating My Study Within the Literature

In spite of many excellent efforts to improve the classroom situation for students and teachers, the gap between the experience of teaching special needs children and the majority of research in the field of special education remains wide. Presently, the majority of research relies upon a positivistic frame of reference. This way of thinking greatly influences what we consider to be important in teaching special needs children. Scientific method establishes factors and elements which are evaluated according to the congruence with a structured sense of what is occurring in teaching handicapped children. Our understanding of the handicapped relies upon identification of acceptance factors which non-handicapped children and adults employ in being with handicapped persons. Teacher attitude is reflected in interactions with the handicapped person. The teacher's attitude also effects the acceptance of the person with

special needs by other non-handicapped students. Teacher practices and attitudes have been considered as factors in the achievement of the handicapped student. The studies examine what are thought to be important aspects of teacher behavior to see if these are of significance.

The latest additions to assist in the uncovering of our understanding of the handicapped include the thoughts of family members and the reflections of disabled persons themselves. Though rare, the people who can speak first-hand of the impact of a disability and the manner in which society treats them are broadening the scope of investigation into better understanding of how we actually see the disabled.

Overall, the emphasis of research correlates with a diagnostic-prescriptive approach to teaching. Positivistic research and a diagnostic-prescriptive approach to teaching focuses upon behavior. Such microscopic vision restricts the larger picture of the world, or of teaching a child with special needs. The restoration of a holistic view of the special needs child is afforded by the development of a "situational interpretive inquiry orientation" (Aoki, 1985, p. 14). Such an orientation is afforded through entering into an "inter-subjective dialogue with the people in the research situation" (p. 16).

Summary and Conclusion

Chapters One and Two have identified the research question and placed the issue in context. The next chapter discusses a research approach which will allow an inquiry into teachers' understandings of handicapped children to be launched.

CHAPTER THREE

CONVERSATION AS A FORM OF RESEARCH

Introduction

Chapter Two examined prevalent and not-so-prevalent ways of seeing a handicapped person. The previous chapter outlined how far we have come in seeing and educating the child with special needs. But, in seeing handicapped children in the context of the past, we also see that the dominant positivistic notions, guiding the teaching and research in the field, do not necessarily lead to better understanding handicapped children. Alternatives to the problem solving mode of research do exist. Conversation as a mode of research is one such alternative to research involving objectivist problem solving.

Research Approach

In this study I will be using conversation as a research approach. As a mode of research, conversation evolves from, and is concerned with, what is being said. Personal meanings are explored through the conversations. Consideration of the

way that we speak as teachers reveals understandings which guide practice. Therefore, meaning is not only personal, it is also a process which entails communal sense-making.

Through conversation we are able to share our experiences with handicapped children. What arises from the conversation points towards meanings which we hold of handicapped persons. Gadamer (1984) says, "To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the object to which the partners in the conversation are directed" (p. 30). Meanings of the participants become available through the conversation itself. Within a conversation there is no set agenda with imposed questions as in an interview. The questions in the conversations in this study arise from a sensitivity to the talk of teachers in conversation about teaching handicapped children. It is an inquiry into the teachers' experience with special needs students, uncovering what is important about these children.

Fundamental to conversation as a mode of research is the priority of the question. According to Gadamer (1984), "to ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled" (p. 326). The openness of a question is not determined by its semantical construction, nor its apparent diversity of responses. The constitution of a genuinely open inquiry relies greatly upon the intent and the spirit in which the question is posed. The direction of a question is given

by the "undetermined possibilities" (p. 337). Questions which seek to direct the answers to conform to the questioner's will, in order to achieve a predetermined solution, are not open questions. The language of the question and in turn, the language of the conversation determines the openness of the question. The researcher may possess a spirit of inquiry, but if there is an agenda either overtly or covertly present, the openness of the question becomes denied.

Gadamer identifies two types of limiting questions. The first tests another's knowledge of basic facts or problem solving ability. These are questions with answers known by the teacher. The second asks questions which have no answers. These questions are exercises in answering questions. Both of these types of questions are contrary to the desire to know something because they are asked within closed boundaries.

He contrasts these two types of closed questions with genuine questions. The genuine question seeks to understand by interrogating a situation. The genuine question implies a desire to know. The desire to know about something is reflected in the response to the question because the answer is not predetermined. The question is generated and guided by experience. A genuine question is not a method of teaching. Nor is a genuine question a means of problem solving. It is, however, a way of coming to understand our relation to whatever is being interrogated. Understanding the way in which we encounter the thing in question is to see the

various meanings it holds for us.

This third type of question, the genuine question, is the fundamental to a conversation. In a conversation, there is never one correct answer to a given question. The answer is indeterminate. In this framework, the question is given priority over the answer. The priority of the question is itself fundamental in establishing the inquiry and setting the boundaries. If the question were of no consequence, or if a specific answer was already established as the only answer to a question, then no genuine question would have existed. Further, the question itself motivates and directs the inquiry. The result of pursuing a question in this manner is the deepening of understanding.

Consider a mentally handicapped child with a behavioral problem. The label of "behavior problem" effects the way in which teachers interact with the child and the manner in which the teachers talk to each other about the child. The stigma attached to the label may prohibit the teacher from reacting to the child in a way in which a behavior is not a problem. In teacher-to-teacher talk, the meaning of "behavior problem" conveys two messages. First, the child is difficult to teach; and second, this difficulty is a problem. In choosing the language of short-hand, the language of teaching, the teacher runs the risk of losing sight of the child. Because of the limits set by the imposition of a positivistically-based label, it "is really a kind of spiritual abandonment" (van

Manen, 1986, p. 18). What becomes most apparent is a "behavior problem." The child is reduced to a collection of behaviors, the most striking of which are negative.

The use of experience, in this case a child behaving poorly, can lead to either a closed or an open point of contact between teachers. Establishing a closed contact limits the possibilities. The closed contact, in the positivistic sense, seeks understanding through attempting to define the problem according to variables which might give rise to the behavior and according to variables which might reduce the problem. The inquiry is closed because the limits are set by the parameters of the problem. Problem solving does not venture past boundaries of behavior or behavioral technology. However, establishing an open contact between teachers is very different. By focusing upon questions raised by the child, which stem from a searching of our understanding of the child, an open conversation allows the child to assume the priority of the inquiry. The very fact that the child creates a problem is promising in that it creates an opportunity to reflect upon the child and to uncover levels of interpretation. The seeking of possible answers to what arises as a problem enhances the possibility of increasing teachers' understanding of the child or what is meant by "behavior problem." The question is an open question because it seeks to establish possibilities which are opened by considering the child, by dwelling upon behavior as a problem

for a teacher.

The actions of the special needs individual may appear to be irrational or have no explanation at all. The problem becomes more acute when one considers the unrefined communication skill of the handicapped person. It is virtually impossible to accurately plumb the depths of the meanings which are held by one who is severely handicapped. Therefore, if we are to come to a better understanding of the possessors of a disability, we must seek alternative ways of entering into the world we share. The teacher makes educated guesses, conjectures, and observations regarding the reasons behind the student's action. In the face of the restricted dialogue offered by those whose voice is stilled by a handicap, a situational interpretive inquiry makes possible an elaboration of these understandings and meanings held by the teacher. From these beginnings, it is possible to better understand the meanings which we hold of the handicapping condition itself through conversation. By joining in conversation to open the possibilities of teaching handicapped children, the participants in the dialogue turn upon the question of handicapped children and teaching as the naming and extension of existing boundaries to our understanding.

Interpretation

Interpretation of the conversations is an ongoing process. In the course of the conversation itself, interpretation relies upon the background and beliefs of the participants and their ability to share meaning through language. ONce set down in print, the background of the interpreter, the knowledge of the subject, and the manner in which the subject is made available combine to mediate the interpretation and the establishment of possibilities, which may include meanings not originally intended by the speakers. In this manner the interpretation of the text opens the text to encompass more possibilities than originally intended.

> The inscription of a dialogue in writing grants the text an autonomy with respect to the subjective intentions of the authors. Otherwise stated, textual meaning, even in the case of a written conversation, can no longer be deemed to coincide completely with the original intentions of the speakers. While it presupposes and expresses these intentions, it also manages to exceed them. (Kearney, 1984, p. 129)

In conversation, things may be continually explored. However, once in print the interpretation is frozen in that particular frame, regardless of the continual development of new and old aspects of the interpretation. Many interpretations may grow from a rereading of the printed interpretation, but the nature of that dialogue between author and reader is then on the basis of the experience and beliefs of the reader. The understandings which are achieved as a

result of the exceeding the initial dimensions are a result of exposing oneself to the possibilities and the "appropriation of the proposed worlds which interpretation unfolds" (Ricoeur, 1982, p. 94).

The interpretations offered within this study are interpretations of the teachers' interpretations. The participants have, based upon their education and experience, laid the foundations for how they understand the children with whom they work. Similarly, my understandings have allowed me to see themes within the conversations. Even so, there is still the opportunity to see more deeply due to the incomplete nature of the text and the mediation of future perspectives (McCarthy, 1978).

The Participants

The study is based upon a series of conversations with a group of teachers engaged in teaching special needs children. In these conversations, questions regarding the teachers' meanings of teaching special needs children evolve from the talk of the teachers. By drawing out what is said about children and teaching, other themes are allowed to emerge. The emergent themes point towards how the teachers see teaching the special needs child.

A private school for Multiply Dependent Handicapped (M.D.H.) children has been selected for the recruitment of

volunteers. The school offers a segregated day-program for handicapped children who are often institutionalized. The children who attend this school live with natural parents, foster parents, adoptive parents, or in group homes. Though the school follows the annual rhythm of holidays as the public school system, a summer program continues through all but two weeks of the summer months. The summer program relies heavily upon arts and crafts activities rather than the regularly scheduled behavioral or cognitive programs run during the normal school year.

The school is staffed by fourteen teachers or classroom staff. The classroom staff operate in paris with seven to eleven children per room. Support staff include two speech therapists, two part-time physiotherapists, two social workers, and two education co-ordinators. The support staff for the school is divided into two teams. Each classroom can draw upon the expertise of the support staff as required, in addition to the regularly scheduled therapy provided students in the room.

The selection of this particular school was largely due to my familiarity of the staff and students. Having been on staff for two years I had already established my credibility as a teacher with the staff. Also, research had suffered from being viewed as something separate from the classroom experience by many of the teachers at this particular school. By being able to share my experience with many of the same

children and teens, a common ground was already established.

More importantly, though some turnover in staff occurred in my absence from the school, I was familiar with some of the staff. This particular school was selected mainly because I needed the teachers to talk openly about their teaching and their students. My study required participants who trusted me and who trusted each other. Sharing and risk-taking are supported and encouraged by trust, and as such, are fundamental when research stems from discourse (Carson, 1986; Weber, 1986). The element of trust was necessary for the teachers to feel as if they could speak freely without being disapproved of or censured. Openness on the part of the researcher and on the part of the participant-teachers was a prerequisite for the proceedings. With trust already established between us, the conversations were able to focus upon "children" and "teaching."

Four teachers volunteered to contribute to the discussions. Bev and Karen are partners in a classroom of the center's youngest children. These children are mentally handicapped and also have cerebral palsy. Marj and a partner teach mentally handicapped, behaviorally disordered children. Valerie and her partner are responsible for the school's older students with cerebral palsy.

Marj

Marj began working with mentally retarded children in 1973. A mother of two, she found that she enjoyed teaching with special needs children and applied her "motherly" approach to her students. Marj approaches her students in a strict but caring fashion, often equating her parenting style with her teaching style.

Since she has been involved with mentally retarded and physically disabled children, marj has taught varying levels of handicapped students. These have included students who are behaviorally disordered, visually impaired, hearing impaired, autistic, and physically impaired. In addition, all are considered to be dependent handicapped.

In 1979, Marj was appointed the school's relief co-ordinator, in-school substitute teacher, and equipment maintenance co-ordinator. For two years she assumed the role of substitute teacher and co-ordinator of relief staff. While filling this position, she also tended to toys and equipment in need of repair, and her efforts in this regard freed teachers to attend to other pressing classroom needs. During this time, Mark was able to observe and participate in many different classroom strategies and programs. She found that in her position she was able to gain much in the way of professional growth, for both herself and other teachers. Her exposure to varied teaching practices within the school

established the foundation for information dissemination and an air of collegiality among the staff. This information sharing allowed innovative ideas and various teaching models to flourish and become better understood by all concerned. Additionally, her expertise in teaching mentally handicapped children and direct knowledge of many of the students in the school make her a valuable substitute and colleague to any classroom.

Upon her return to being assigned regular classroom duties in 1981, she was able to re-establish her teaching style incorporating much of what she had learned from her experience in the previous two years working with a dozen or so teachers.

Karen

Karen is a relatively recent graduate of the University of Alberta holding a degree in Elementary Education. A native of Winnipeg, she sought education and employment in Alberta. Upon graduation, she was hired to teach at the centre and has taught at the centre for two years. Since graduating in 1984, Karen has taught mentally and physically handicapped students. At the end of the 1985-86 term, she plans to return to Winnipeg.

Even though she had received little formal training in the area of teaching special needs children, she incorporates

her knowledge of elementary education, adapting what she can to meet the needs of her students, and come to a personal understanding of her students.

For the 1985-86 school term, Karen co-teaches with Bev in the school's intake classroom which functions as a form of early intervention. Since their classroom is composed of children two and a half years of age to three or four years of age, the classroom has the youngest students in the school.

Karen is the only one of the participants in the conversations with whom I have not shared teaching duties.

Bev

Bev received her training as a teacher in South Africa and, at the age of twenty, began her teaching career which spanned grades one through six. At one time or another, her four children have all had her as their teacher. Bev and her family relocated to Canada, bringing with her fifteen years of elementary school teaching experience.

Six months after arriving in Canada, Bev began teaching mentally handicapped children, and she has continued in this field for ten years. She has taught homogeneous and heterogeneous groups of children which have included behavioral disorders, cerebral palsy, autism, sensory handicaps, Down's Syndrome, and physical handicaps. The ages of the students have ranged from two and one-half years of age

to fifteen or so years of age.

For the last few years, Bev has been assigned to teach the youngest of the handicapped children at the school, forming an early intervention classroom. She describes her room as a type of intake classroom, which offers youngsters their first experiences at school. One of Bev's foremost goals is to make a child's initial experience in school a positive and secure time. Due to a focus upon early intervention, Bev and Karen, her teaching partner, instruct a wide variety of very young children, most of whom are physically impaired and require a great amount of physical stimulation and care if teachers are to assist in their development.

Valerie

Valerie received her elementary education Bachelor of Education degree, with a minor in special education in 1981. During the summer of 1980, She taught mentally handicapped students in a summer program. Initially, Valerie was involved with behaviorally disordered children, but was later assigned to teach older students with cerebral palsy. She has been involved with this latter group of students for three years.

Since her students possess severe forms of cerebral palsy, Valerie has focused her teaching on academics and living skills. She constantly struggles with the problem of

intuitively knowing that some of her students are more intelligent than the credit that is given them by checklists, assessments, and programs. As part of her search to improve her teaching and enhance the quality of life for her students, Valerie has focused upon teaching material that may prove functional for the students as they mature. Computers have been included in her classroom in an attempt to maximize the small amount of motor control which some of the students can accomplish.

One of Valerie's primary concerns is her ability to remain current with new teaching strategies and equipment which have been proven elsewhere. To remain abreast of developments, Valerie regularly reviews professional journals and magazines, and attempts to expand her knowledge through enrolment in specialized courses for the multiply dependent handicapped. She has also been considering enrolling in a graduate degree program in the same field for the last few years. Valerie's level of commitment to providing the best education that she can for her students is reflected in her deep attachment to her students and her continual attempt to remain knowledgeable in her area of expertise.

Conducting the Study

During a regularly scheduled staff meeting, I was given time to present my research proposal and explain what I hoped

to accomplish. Four volunteers agreed to participate in the series of discussions. The conversations were scheduled during January to April, 1986. Specific dates were: Conversation One (C1), January 20; Conversation Two (C2), February 10; and Conversation Three (C3), April 17. The meetings were held, by consensus, in late afternoon. Highlighted transcripts with marginal notes of interest for each preceding conversation were available to the teachers four to seven days prior to the next conversation.

A series of conversations held between teachers provides the background for seeing their understandings of handicapped children. The impetus for such a discussion is a need to share what we have come to see in special needs children and in out teaching of special needs children. At the heart of the inquiry is a search for the meanings we have appropriated from our experience with them.

In this study, the openness of the research question lies in the attempt to understand the meanings of teachers concerning handicapped students. Drawing upon our understandings of teaching handicapped children made explicit through language we are able to understand the limits of our openness. With the limits defined, we are able to examine and accept, reject, or modify our boundaries. Entering into conversation with teachers of the handicapped I bring the research questions of "children" and "teaching." By entering into a dialogue with the teachers about what is important for

them in the teaching of special needs children I am allowed access to the meanings which are drawn from their experience with these children.

The initial conversation begins by requesting a sharing of personal view about teaching special needs individuals. Subsequent questions or directions for talk are generated from the conversation itself. The conversations do not progress in a linear fashion. Talk meanders in and around topics. The unedited conversations reach onto tangents as thoughts are ignited by the talk. As a result, the conversations in Chapter Four are reconstructed to establish a form of continuity for a question or topic around which the talk focuses.

"Children" and "teaching" are the two research questions which guide my study. They allow a structure to be established, while allowing a flexibility to exist enabling the exploration of what is important to the teachers. Like the teacher responding to the needs of a child, the establishment of this structure allows themes central to a teacher's understanding to emerge. Close attention is paid to what the participants say about "children" in general, and special needs children in particular. "Teaching" receives similar attention.

The atmosphere for the conversations is informal and relaxed. In order to discuss teaching handicapped children, the teachers draw upon their experiences with handicapped

children. The teacher memories of particular children are sometimes particularly vivid in emphasizing a point. Through our shared knowledge of the children around whom our talk centered, we were able to draw upon a common pool of memory and understanding. Our communal memories of instances involving specific children gives a shared ground for the joint understanding of words, concepts, and actions. Where this occurs, I have attempted to be cognizant of the verbal short-hand and have tried to explain more completely.

Interpreting the Conversations

The research interest in "children" and "teaching" provides a guide for the questioning which leads my study. Conversational inquiry upon the research questions forms around topics which the teachers use to share meanings formed from their experience with special needs children. These topics of conversation have been identified as one form of theme (Tesch, 1987). At this level, the term "theme" is used to denote "content, or topic, or statement, or fact" (p. 231). In this study, this level of theme will be identified as a "topic" of the conversation. It marks the content of the talk and the direction in which the talk is progressing. The reconstruction of conversation organizes the talk into topics which form from the dialogue showing the meanings and the priorities of the participants.

Tesch identifies another level of theme. This second use of theme points toward a "major dimension, major aspect, or constituent of the phenomenon studied" (p. 231). In this study the term "theme" will point towards the notion of a "major dimension" found within the conversations. At this level, themes place into question understandings which the teachers hold of handicapped children. Through examining the language of the teachers, the implications of their interpretations of handicapped children allow significant themes to be made explicit.

In developing themes in this study, both a "highlighting approach" and a "line-by-line approach" were used (van Manen, 1984a). In a "highlighting approach," continued readings of the text point towards what is "revealing about the experience being described" (p. 21). In a "line-by-line approach," every sentence or phrase is explored in an effort to reveal something about the experience. The post-conversation interpretation approached transcripts of the conversations in both ways. First, they were used to identify the topics and the flow of the conversation. And second, they were applied to the topics themselves to uncover themes which reside in the topics.

Also useful in uncovering meaning is attention to metaphors. Recovering the metaphors used in our conversation is a way to reveal meanings which are so embedded within our understanding that we may no longer see them or the

distortions which they produce. Kliebard (1982) suggests that metaphors assist in forming understandings of the unknown from the known. The metaphors that teachers use in describing children and teaching can be identified in the conversations. These have helped to shape their thinking.

Summary and Conclusion

Thus far, Chapter One establishes the impetus for and outlines the task of the study. Chapter Two considers existing research representing the attempt to understand how teachers understand teaching handicapped children. However, the approaches used in gaining a partial understanding are relatively limited. The examination of beliefs and attitudes according to checklists and surveys of teacher behavior or time samples of teacher efficacy provides us with a collection of material which only scratches the surface of the basis for which the teachers understand their special needs students. A survey of interpretive studies which lead toward a deeper understanding of special needs children is also included in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three offers interpretive inquiry as a means of going beyond the positivistic thinking which presently limits our understanding of handicapped children. Central to pursuing conversation as a mode of research is the focus of the discourse of the question. My study uses conversation as

a research tool to uncover the meanings of special needs children for teachers of children with special needs. Interpretation of the conversations is assisted by combing the discourse for metaphors which have helped to shape the teachers' thinking.

In the next chapter are reconstructed conversations with teachers of the dependent handicapped. The initial interpretation attempts to show the intent of the teachers within the context of the conversations.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONDUCTING THE CONVERSATIONS

Introduction

Chapter Three elaborated upon keeping a conversation open so that the discourse places before itself the research questions of "teaching" and "children." Another aspect of keeping the conversation open is to interrogate the questions about "teaching" and "children" which arise from the discourse. In Chapter Four, the flow of the discussion is plotted. Topics are noted for later consideration.

As stated in the previous chapter, the conversations presented in this chapter are reconstructed. By reconstructing the conversations a topic which arises momentarily in various parts of the conversation is allowed to be grouped to provide a better sense of what the teachers have to say about a particular topic. The reconstruction provides clarity for elements which were originally woven throughout the discourse. Because the conversations presented in this chapter are reconstructed, they already represent an interpretation. Reconstruction of the conversations was

assisted by van Manen's (1984a) suggestion of approaching the text "line-by-line" and through "highlighting." By using these two approaches to the conversations, I became aware of major topics arising from the talk about teaching handicapped children.

Conversation One

Our conversation occurs at the end of the school day. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal. Seated around a circular table are three of the four volunteers who have agreed to participate in the conversations. Bev and Karen talk about some of the events of the day in hushed tones. Marj makes arrangements for someone to let her know when the overdue bus arrives for one of her students who sits dozing in a stroller beside her. Valerie, the fourth participant, is making her apologies for being unable to join us for our first meeting. She leaves for a previous appointment and promises to be present for the next conversation.

Fundamental to the inquiry of teaching handicapped children are the understandings the teachers have of "teaching" and "children." Experience has helped to solidify meanings for each of the teachers. The beginning of the initial conversation is an attempt to reach these meanings. Asking them to reflect and draw upon their experiences allows

the meanings to be made explicit. The first question is hoped to elicit things about teaching special needs children which are important to each teacher.

I begin by thanking them for agreeing to participate in the series of conversations. This is followed by a formal introduction explaining my interest and motives.

Glenn: As you know, I worked as a teacher-aide and rehabilitation counsellor with handicapped children and adults in different programs, including here at the center. I've been fortunate to have worked with Bev, Marj, and Valerie here, before enroling in the Bachelor of Education Program. Having completed my teacher-training, I still have some questions from my experiences with mentally and physically challenged persons which remain unanswered.

When I began working with the handicapped children, I was surprised that most people not involved in these children remarked that I must have a lot of patience. I thought this an odd attribute because I've never really considered myself as being particularly patient. This led me to thinking about what makes teaching special needs children different from teaching other children. You don't usually hear someone say that they teach Grade Five, and hear people tell them that they must be very patient, or very caring to be able to teach that grade. But, family, friends, and strangers are apt to jump to that conclusion as soon as you say, "I work with handicapped children." So, I'm here to listen to what you feel is important about teaching handicapped children.

Could I get some personal views about teaching the handicapped?

Marj: Well, mine's more on behavior. I see behavior getting better. I an see at the

start of the year you're at this step, and toward the end of the year they're doing more. Our classroom is a lot of behavior component. One-to-one work. We have to settle him down before he goes on to finish his program.

Karen: I enjoy working with the children because . . . you can deal with a situation one-on-one, and I like working one-on-one with children. When there's a big number of children, it's a different sort of a way of teaching. And to see improvement in something that's so minuscule but, it becomes very important. And when you start seeing progress, it's really encouraging. When you see a normal child it's like a miracle case.

I wouldn't want to be in a medical profession because it would deal with a lot of responsibility with the physical well-being of someone, and yet I'm able to care for physical aspects of the children and also to look at the education part of it, and to do some kind of directing and setting up situations. And be creative, the different ways you can motivate kids to try, to teach them, to improve behaviors, to change them, and inspire them to be more active. To explore and learn from their explorations.

It's a creative outlet with the physical satisfaction of physical contact with kids. It's an emotional one too, when you get really exciting that someone accomplishes something that you've been working on for a while.

Bev: Well, I began working in this field because I wasn't qualified in Alberta to teach normal children. First, it was a very new and different experience to be exposed to handicapped children. But, I stuck with it for several years and left to teach normal children, and found that I wasn't enjoying the work. I wanted to teach handicapped children. I then questioned why this was so, and realized that I was more fulfilled and rewarded by

> these children than I was with normal children. And I also particularly enjoyed the contact with the parents and being able to work with the parents in a closer way than you do in a normal school environment. The parents come to trust and rely on you and you know that you can go to the parents with problems that you have with the children. So that there's a teamwork there, as well as, teamwork within the classroom structure.
>
> I like the less formal mode of teaching in a classroom such as ours. I would like to see handicapped children as appreciating and feeling security more than a normal child would. A normal child is many times antagonistic towards the teacher. These children don't seem to bear any grudges and they don't have "hang-ups." They sure give you a run for your money with behavior problems and manipulation, but normal children do that too. I find it rewarding and fulfilling. As Karen says, when you see one tiny bit of improvement in an area or a small amount of development happening . . . [Nods towards the sleeping child]. This guy's been pretty exciting because he's just gone ahead and done all sorts of things, but then he's not too handicapped. We have seen some really encouraging things happening, just in the last six months we have children crawling, whereas they weren't mobile before. We see them getting to stand on their feet.
>
> I like the freedom to be creative, to be imaginative. I also like the fact that there's not a strict and rigid curriculum that you have to stick to. Whereas in the public schools you're bound to weekly journals to stick to what's being taught.

It may be of some significance that when asked about her personal view of teaching, Marj, the teacher with the least formal training, immediately focuses upon behavior. The role

of behavior also influences the manner in which she sees teaching as being a sequence of steps which progressively leads to an ultimate goal.

In contrast, Karen provides us with a personal point of reference. Immediately evoked is a strong personal, emotional response which shows the importance she places on liking children. Enjoyment and the opportunity to work with a child individually are two of the main reasons Karen offers for teaching a special needs child.

Like Karen, Bev also comments immediately upon the personal satisfaction derived from teaching special needs children. Karen uses teaching as an outlet for her creativity. She feels that she can reach children in her classroom through motivation. As she explores her creativity, she encourages the student to explore his/her abilities. Excitement is a by-product of the creative-explorative process. But, the gains made are not necessarily immediate because Karen mentions being excited about things that have been worked on for a while.

Karen and Bev take turns working with students on a one-to-one or two-on-one basis while the other teacher works with the remainder of the students. Karen obviously values the one-on-one sessions with the children. In a one-on-one, she can see things she otherwise might not have time to see. And, when working with a child to whom development is acknowledged

in small increments, the slightest change is a major accomplishment.

Behavior

Marj and Bev both make references to behavior in their opening remarks. They suggest that behavior is a problem. Similarly Karen refers to the influence of behavior by mentioning the encouragement of seeing progress in small increments. Though hers is not a direct nor a negative reference to behavior, it would appear that behavior in some aspect may be important.

Glenn: So, it's to clear up behavior so that learning can occur then? A behavior may stand in the way of other learning?

Marj: Yeah, a lot of the behavior stands in the way of their progress in their program. It seems like they get frustrated if it doesn't work, so we have to out-time him, and leave him alone for a while and then start all over again.

Glenn: Sounds like a pretty frustrating process though.

Marj: Some days it is. Some days you even have to just walk out and forget about the whole program because the behavior is not settling down. And come in the next day. The next day seems to be better.

Right now, I think we have increased some behaviors. We can go fifteen or twenty minutes without a behavior tantrum in a one-on-one program. Each child has his own program. [Indicates the sleeping child.] See, we don't have that. If he could go to sleep once-in-a-while and wake

up, he might forget about his bad behavior.

Bev: With Amanda, there again you've got a behavior problem, so you've got to work at it when she's not being a behavior problem. So you've got to work on something else.

Karen: So one program interferes with another.

The focus upon measuring tangibles is fundamental to teaching according to behavioral guidelines. It is through counting "seeable actions" that gains may be noted. Positive behaviors are generally termed goals or skills. But, when faced with a difficult child, what is more observable than a tantrum? When the participants refer to "behavior" it is almost always used to describe a negative occurrence or outburst.

The focus is still upon negative behavior and what to do when it arises. But Marj and Bev are hinting at the importance of the readiness of the child in learning situations. Marj continues to describe the procedure.

Marj: In our area, when we do our programs and the behavior interferes more than five minutes, we just desist and start a little bit later, or take another child and come back and see if he's ready for it again. With some kids it's a hard thing. But you have to have a lot of patience. And if you get frustrated, all you do is forget about the program and walk out for a few minutes. Two, three minutes. When you come back you're back at stage one.

Glenn: That's a pretty positive way to deal with it.

Marj: You have to out-time yourself, or out-time the child. With the child sometimes it's pretty hard because the other kids are into the same tantrums. You want to get away from it for a second, you have to time-out yourself. And that seems to work. They know why. They have the smarts to know that you're not happy with them, so you just walk out on them, and they seem to know when I come back, they try and be good.

Marj describes the procedures involved in handling a child's negative behavior. She finishes by implying that a student is aware of his effect on herself and that he can intentionally provoke her. The onset of a negative behavior has consequences in the form of a procedure followed by the teachers.

Goals

At this point, the flow of the conversation shifts of its own accord. Perhaps the talk of procedures and one-on-one sessions brings the question of determining the content of the sessions.

Karen: You see a need for them to develop a skill to grasp something but they have only minimal movement, only can move part of their fingers because of their hypertonic muscles from cerebral palsy. And you start working with things from around the room.

Thinking of different ideas to incorporate what they are able to do, and to develop different skills from the same ability. And, working with another person in a partnership is a big plus too,

because you can integrate abilities they have with your own. And you can work out a team situation in your classroom that facilitates things that are best for the kids. And it also fulfils your best abilities, it's advantageous for us to work together.

Bev: You're working towards a goal with a child. With one child we did a lot of de-sensitization with her. At times it was kind of unpleasant for her because she just hated to be touched, but you just had to follow through. And in some ways you felt kind of cruel when you were putting pressure on her feet, and she was pulling away saying: I don't want this. I don't like this. And you have to take the attitude I know you don't like this, but you have to do it so you will be eventually be able to do those things with your feet, and like it. Now, she's getting around in her walker. In that attitude, I had to be aggressive sometimes to make her do things I wanted her to, just to get through the de-sensitization.

With Thomas, and the standing frame, he wouldn't stand there for three minutes without a temper tantrum. He's now standing through circle, so we had to be aggressive in a way. We want you to do this, and not be put off by his behavior.

Karen mentions "seeing a need for them to develop a skill or grasp something'; and Bev describes how, in "working towards a goal with that child," she persevered in the child's best interest. The talk of goals introduces the topic of curriculum.

Bev: It is very important in this field to have things written down so that you know where you're going. But I don't believe it's used in the same way it is in the public school system, because there are three factors: behavior factors, physical disability factors, and health or medical

instability factors. These three tell you on a given day you are not going to follow through on any particular goal, program, or curriculum setting that you had put out for yourself that day.

In the public school, if a child is sick, they stay home. And they're not that medically unstable. They're not on medication, that on a given day can make a terrific difference to the programs that you've implemented. Curriculum in this setting and that in the public school vary so much because of the latitude that you give to medically unstable children. Curriculum doesn't become the be-all and end-all.

Glenn: I agree. Curriculum should be a living process, an interpretive process.

Marj, how do you feel curriculum fits into your classroom?

Marj: We follow quite a few steps from it, but we adapt it. It seems to help at different levels. These kids are quite low functioning. We've been told we're following it.

Glenn: Is that a teacher's job, to follow the curriculum?

Marj: Well, in the beginning of the year you write your programs, and you have to follow some kinds of steps. You can look it up and adapt it to the child.

Karen: Some of the programs you make up as you go.

Glenn: So everybody's saying you follow the guidelines but individualize it for your students.

Marj: It's been more helpful this year because some of them have been quite high functioning, but in past years there was no way to break it down to smaller steps to adapt to the kids.

Bev: And in our room, we've got children who are functioning at such extreme cognitive levels that everyone's got to have individualized programs.

Karen: You can set up situations. There's a lot of adaptive equipment. You can use your creativity as an outlet for developing . . .

Bev: Karen's great at developing equipment in the environment to create a position for a child.

Karen: The difference between your room [Marj's] and our room is that they've had enough background and data taken on the kids so that you can group the kids in the areas or the goals you want to focus on. In our intake room there's such a variety of kids and variety of abilities.

Bev: And for most of them, it's their first experience at school, so they've got to adjust and adapt to a new environment plus some of the things . . . . Programs.

The curriculum goals are seen as helpful by the teachers. But, these goals must be balanced by the situation of the particular classroom and by the day-to-day process of teaching.

Getting to Know the Child

From the talk of goals, specifically goals established by curriculum documents comes the topic of modifying the goals for the special needs child. Adaptation of curriculum objectives and of methods to achieve the goals is necessary for a dependent handicapped student. Depending upon the

Karen: And, sometimes the child's personality is the thing that keeps you from realizing it might be a lazy kid. And you'll be working with him and suddenly he'll respond in a way that hasn't definitely shown before. He's passively done what you've wanted, but when he starts directly doing it, it's a fluke. But, when he starts doing it two or three times, within two sessions in a week period. You start thinking, well, maybe there is something else here.

And, so you start working on those areas, but there's time limits too. There's physical limits, there's medication limits, there's environmental limits. Some have things that are happening at home are affecting him while he's at school and when those things aren't on at home, then he's more apt to do things that you ask him in his programs at school. Like grandma might be there. Grandma does everything for him.

Bev: A totally different culture might be waiting for him at home.

Karen: Yeah, that's true. There might be a totally different language that's used at home.

For a special needs teacher to know a child, he/she must take into account the physical impairments which require modification of strategies, goals, or equipment. Getting to know the child, how he/she reacts to certain things, likes/dislikes, personality traits, sense of humor and the like adds to the useable knowledge base. Blending this knowledge of what the child can or cannot do and what the child is like, with other considerations is important. The teacher must try to be aware of the other elements which

effect the child's life. The child may be struggling with an emotional problem as a result of a fight with another student on the bus. Language or cultural differences in the home also have an impact upon the child's behavior or emotional state in school. Knowledge from all aspects of a child's life could conceivably account for why a child is doing or not doing something. From this wide base of knowledge, the teacher selects an appropriate option for dealing with the child's need at the moment. Short and long-term goals are mediated through accounting for a child's mood, willingness, physical impairments, home life, and medical status.

The teachers have a lot to juggle in their teaching. Not only must they know what they should be teaching, they must also develop a knowledge of each student so that subskills can be identified to better enable him/her to expand his/her ability. Adapting goals through working on sub-skills to bring them within reach of a child's ability may increase the likelihood of skill or concept acquisition. However, one by-product of modifying the curriculum into smaller steps is the fact that the teachers may focus on such small steps that the whole child is momentarily lost.

Getting to know the child also entails developing a broad knowledge of many areas. The teachers' knowledge about the child includes a spectrum from the physiology of cerebral palsy to academic skills.

Karen: Or, they put him on a higher medication, and you no longer have an effective program because the child is so out of it that he can't manipulate things anymore. You have a spoon-feeding program, and he can't even hold a spoon because he's so sloppy. So it's frustrating.

It's such a broad range of things. You have a lot of different areas, and you can have a program for a child in four to five areas. I could have at least three programs for this child in one area alone, and now I have to make my priorities straight because I only have this much time, and which one is more important for him? Which one is going to be more effective?

Marj: And doesn't it go back to parents? They have certain priorities.

Karen: Yes, and in the long-run the only thing you're really basing your programs on is: What's going to be beneficial for him? Independence-wise, in the long-run.

Marj: It's very emotional when the parents see the progress of the children at home. That's a big boost for the teacher. Okay, it's starting to carry over.

Karen: It's very emotional when someone else sees . . .

Marj: Or, the child's done something, like biting, last year and he's not doing it anymore.

Or, potty-training a child. Like Tony, after seven years, well, he's doing it. A twelve-year old, he's finally out of diapers. It's something like that that is a big goal for parents. I can see that as being quite an accomplishment.

Karen: If he starts vocalizing, and they say start putting him on a vocalization/communication program. I'd hold off on that, I wouldn't put it as a

priority. I'd work on that incidentally, and have a bigger base to work from. Work at it incidentally, all through the day, and when you have a base, and there's a bit more meat to what that child has, then you can work with it.

You don't start weeding around a flower that's starting to grow, because it's going to uproot it. You have to let that flower root itself into the ground, and the ground to get a hold of the flower. The same thing goes with the kid, until he has some steps, a bigger base from where he's working from.

Bev: An example is with Amy, and Bonnie [the speech therapist] is wanting to do a communication program with her during lunchtime. This child has so many oral-motor difficulties just to get her mouth around the food, and then place another demand on her brain, to say not only must you use your mouth to keep it in, to use your tongue, you lips, to chew, to swallow, and remember all those things, you must also make choices. Do you want this, or that? Tell us what you want. So you first get her to use her mouth.

Teaching is an effort where teachers find themselves considering the child's ability and disability, the curriculum, parental priorities, and the opinions of specialists. The amazing part is that Bev can still keep the child as a primary focus. She empathizes with the child about the possible confusion that she may be experiencing.

Not only do teachers share with others the identification and establishment of goals for a child, but teachers must also be able to share a child's progress with others. Marj feels emotional about gains a student makes at school being notices

at home by the parent(s). Results at school generalized to the home give her satisfaction and recognition as a teacher. It is important for the gains to be seen by not only the teacher, but others as well. With Karen and Marj considering independence as an understood ultimate goal, perhaps the unsaid criteria is the skill gained to be accomplished not in the presence of the teacher or parent, but in the absence of either adult.

Karen and Marj continue to discuss getting to know a child.

Karen: It's a combination of everything, so it's really difficult to develop an idea where these kids are coming from. And it takes so long to get to know a child, it would be nice to have a child for more than a year. And to have the program all year round too.

Summer programming is a good break for the teachers, and we really need it. But it would be nice to be able to continue throughout the summertime. Because it's so beneficial for the kids.

Marj: And they lose so much of it, they just forget about a week. After summer it's a couple of steps down from where they were.

Karen: After Christmas vacation.

Glenn: From you own children, or from observing normal children, a possible difference between a normal child and a handicapped child may be that gains made through the school year are lost over the holidays They lose things more quickly?

Marj: Some of them lost a little, but they caught on quite fast again. One child stayed the same, but three lost a few

steps, we had to go back a few steps. But it didn't take them long to get back to where they were before. They wouldn't really lose it altogether, but it would take a while to get them back to where they were before the holidays.

Glenn: So review is an important part of teaching.

Marj: Yes, you always have to review. One child went back from step eleven to step four, and she's still back there.

Bev: After the holidays, I know. We have that situation in our room too.

Karen: And, we change every September. Reorganize the kids, change partners.

Bev: And, that's why we say: Why can't we have the children for two years at least to establish . . . It takes a full year to even begin to work on programs. It's only now that we're in the swing of things, and it's time to wind up.

Marj: I know.

Bev: So, if we can carry on as soon as the summer break is finished and come back to that same room with the same children, and reinstate everything that we've done and built up, it would take at least three months to get to where they were before the six-week holiday. But, at least there'll be consistency and familiarity.

Karen: I think it would be great to keep programming through the summertime too. And, just maybe take a day out of a week for special events, if we so choose.

Marj: Well, that's what we did last year pretty well. We pretty well carried over our main programs. And that helped a few of them. One little guy was almost gone for the whole summer. Because the buses wouldn't . . . she was so far out in her community. So, she lost a lot. Right

now she's back where she was. That's a hell of a thing. That's just maddening.

Karen: Yeah, off for six-weeks, you lose a whole year.

Marj: The other students, they just went right on. They finished their programs in the first three months and then went on with new programs. And, you see, Mary's still on . . . It's so sad. You know she can do it, she's one of the brightest in the room.

If some of those kids get two new teachers this year, look out. They like things the same, especially that class, look out.

Well, that's the thing we work on. You have to teach not to drop back as far [after holidays] or get used [to a new teacher] a little faster than two years.

Getting to know a child involves time. ONe aspect of time is the normal course of annual events. This is where the teachers see regression following holidays. Though karen recognizes that the holidays are important for teachers, the acknowledged impact of time away on the students is regression.

In spite of the best efforts on the part of the teacher to get to know a child, one can never say that he/she truly knows all about the child. There is always more to learn.

Marj: With Tony, we never really pushed him with signs. We had him point to the picture. Well, he's started signing all by himself, he's signing better than one of the other, higher functioning kids. And he just clicks, and two or three words in a row. We never put any pressure on him because we never thought he'd be ready for this. But just from watching the

other kids, and we shape the other kids hands, without helping him, everyday he has a new sign. It's just pouring out.

It is really rewarding to see him do this. There is something happening around him now. We always were trying to work more with the others trying to have them sign because we knew they could do it.

Karen: They had the potential.

Marj: At first we didn't see the potential in Tony, now we're really pushing him hard too because we know he has the potential. About a new sign a week.

Another child will go through every sign he knows before he gets the right sign. But, we ask Tony to sign, this or that, and he signs right off.

Karen: So, we just give them a myriad of experiences. To figure out the kind of potential they have.

The first conversation closes with an example of a child who was underestimated and Karen's remark that a child needs a variety of experiences to stimulate their learning and reach his/her potential. Though potential usually refers to an unlimited quality, Karen equates potential with independence. She holds onto a hope of developing independent life skills in the child. The goal of independence is the highest degree of development hoped for the dependent child.

Interpretation of the First Conversation

The organizing questions regarding the teachers' understanding of "children" and "teaching" provide a base from which to explore the teachers' understandings of the children with whom they work and in addition to their teaching practices. Though teaching is a personal interpretation for each teacher, in considering the question of "teaching," the three teachers allude to some similar understandings of the purpose and act of teaching.

There is agreement among the participants that teaching requires the teacher identify and prioritize goals for the student. Though these goals may allow for teacher and parental input, the child's input is relegated to whether or not he/she is capable of performing a particular behavior or skill. The task of teaching, for these teachers, is to present skills to the child in manageable segments. Teaching can be split into various areas of development which may be divided further. Cognition, gross motor, fine motor, living skills, and communication may be seen as areas of learning. Cognition, for example, may be distilled into pre-math, which may be divided into number identification, matching, or grouping.

Karen and Marj both consider behavior as an entity in its own right. There is a heavy emphasis upon behavior which is

observable and which is present or absent. If it is present, behavior may be a positive or a negative indicator. Again, if it is absent, behavior may also be a positive or a negative indicator of the development of the child.

Generalization is another topic which begins to appear. Generalization is seen as a behavior or skill replicable in different settings, with different people. It is an observable, concrete act which allows a teacher to see that the child has indeed acquired the skill being taught. The problem Marj sees with generalization is in the lack of a child's ability to generalize.

Learning is seen to occur in familiar settings with specific materials and familiar people. The introduction of novelty creates a problem for the handicapped child. Changes in routine or teachers, or breaks in the program, whether scheduled or not, threaten a special needs child's acquisition or retention of a skill or knowledge. Novelty is a factor in the lack of generalization of a particular skill. The teachers see that a child, who is trained in one setting with one teacher, has difficulty performing that skill in another location and/or with another teacher.

Knowing the child is seen as essential. The teachers discover the child's physical range of movement, comfort levels, sense of humor, abilities, needs, strengths, preferences, etc. These form the fist basis for knowing a

handicapped child. Knowing the child in this manner allows the teacher to identify appropriate goals and methods. It also allows the teacher to make necessary modifications that are sensitive to a child's range of movement, hearing impairment, or other special need. Without knowing a child, teacher flexibility is diminished. It may be the case that the effectiveness of the teacher traits of flexibility and empathy are directly related to the depth of the knowledge a teacher possesses about a child.

Because a handicapped child may not have sophisticated or even basic communication skills, a teacher's empathy may also be considered essential in any attempt at understanding the child. Taking into account the child's abilities and difficulties combine with assumptions about the child's emotional responses and needs to lead the teacher in making an educated guess regarding the reasons behind a child's action or inaction. It is part of human nature to explain things. Given the lack of feedback from some handicapped children it is not surprising that the participants lend children rational bases for their behavior.

Finally, the three participants believe building a rapport is important. The teacher becomes familiar with the child's preferences, skills, needs, and behavior. The reverse is also true. The child becomes comfortable with the school environment, teacher(s), and expectations of the teachers.

In short, the teacher and child develop a working relationship.

Conversation Two

As in the first conversation, the second conversation occurs in the late afternoon in the staff room of the school. The fourth participant, Valerie, joins the discussion.

The second conversation is led by a sense that we had only scratched the surface of topics discussed in the previous conversation. I feel an urge to impose questions upon the conversation in order to get more complete answers. But, as this approach would inhibit the openness of the conversation I turn to interrogating what has already been said. In this manner, I hope to follow the spirit of open questioning about the teaching of special needs children. Having familiarized myself with the transcript of conversation one and providing the teachers with a highlighted copy with marginal notes about the topics we discussed, I approach the second conversation to turn the conversation back to a topic which was not fully explored earlier.

The Role of Goals

Glenn: When we talked last time there was mention of specific goals or steps which students are expected to achieve. There was also talk in terms of the teacher

guiding the student. Where do these goals come from? The "Dependent Handicapped Curriculum"?

Valerie: As the kids get older, it [the curriculum] doesn't always seem to fit their needs. There are things that seem to fit well and there is much that you have to adapt because it doesn't truly meet the needs of your students. At times it's not realistic, the goals that have been set up at present, for the dependent handicapped.

Glenn: So you're saying that the older the student, the less likely the curriculum would be for that student?

Valerie: It appears to be that way. I know when children are younger you are able to look at them and say: I know they have this potential and I can see that they should be able to do this, because I can see my little child do that. I can have some hope for them and teach them to do such-and-such. Because that's a possibility.

Once they reach their teen years, you really begin to sense a need to teach them something that's really valuable to them. That's going to help them gain independence. I think now, for the population we serve, it's very difficult when you're planning learning experiences to make them so that what they've learned, they'll be able to use after they leave here. Because, after they leave here, there's nothing. You can teach them how to be as independent as possible in a home situation.

But, when they have some intellectual ability, and you know they understand. And yet, they're so limited in what they can do. Even what society is willing to accept them. They have the potential, they have the ability to do something; but what that is right now is hard to say. Unless the community-as-a-whole is willing to open-up more to seeing people we service here, as a viable person.

Karen: With younger children, you have more time and they're at a much more impressionable age. With normal children, development is most rapid at five or six, and a lot may happen during that period. You think that you can get the most done, so you have a bit more hope. And to see how quickly some of the children learn, having worked with older children, it seems to be proof enough that they are more easily influenced and moulded through our programming, to encourage them to develop their independence.

I think that working with teenagers, that they have pretty well reached the potential of who they are going to be. During their adulthood, there may be something that they may catch a hold of and develop an interest or skills in; but, working with a child, you think you have a few more years to increase their abilities.

The participants are saying that it is not always possible to adapt curricular goals to meet an individual student's needs. But any adaptations that are possible require a thorough knowledge of each student. Independence in some form is the ultimate goal the teachers identify for their students. And as such, the goal of independence places for these children requires community-based support.

At the same time the age of the child becomes a factor in teaching him/her. Younger children have more time to develop skills and the community also has time to develop support services. Karen believes that younger children are "more easily influenced."

Age

The discussion continues by further exploring age and learning.

Bev: I've found that working early intervention has given me a more positive attitude. Early intervention is the answer to success with these kids. If they're left, and you start working with them later, they've already passed that stage of development.

Karen: Even the review and up-keep of abilities suffers. There was one girl who was at another school, and she came back a few years later when they re-instated service to the over-eighteen year olds. When she came back, she had lost a lot of her skills. So, we wonder, if we had influenced the children at a younger age, maybe they would have maintained them a bit more because of the degree of reinforce.

Who knows? Even if you had one child and worked on all programs, there is still the question of whether they would still have the skills.

Valerie: I perceive it as when children are younger you can say: "Okay, there's the potential that this is going to happen by the time the child is ten years old, say the child is two." Eight years down the line, lots can happen. But when you're sixteen years old and twenty years old, and you're looking at educational experiences, you know out there there's nothing at the moment. I'm working to an ideal, I hope that some point in time there will be some kind of workshop setting for them. Some place where they'll be able to go and be able to do something, not just have to sit at home or at a group-home.

Glenn: It sounds as if you're looking at the discrepancy between what you see as a child's potential with what is realistic, what is available in the community.

Valerie: Uhmm. Without supports in the community to help with housekeeping, marketing, daily living kinds of things, getting a child to reach his potential would be hopeless.

Working with younger students offers Bev "a more positive attitude." She too believes in the importance of developmental stages and that timing teaching with the stages results in more success. It would appear that the participants are involved in a process of simultaneously seeing a child's potential compared with the reality. As Valerie notes, a part of the reality is the support available for a dependent handicapped person to be able to live as independently as possible.

Priorities Which Guide Teaching Special Needs Children

It is becoming increasingly clear that the teachers are active in the teaching/learning process. The child is less active and is at the mercy of things which are out of his/her control. He/she has no control over his/her age. Nor is the child able to personally speed implementing community support services. The child also falls victim to stages of development and prerequisite skills which build upon each

other. The focus turns to identifying what is of importance to the child with special needs.

Karen: I have a deep concern. I think I hope that these kids will become independent and happy and live out a life as fully as possible. They'll never be able to be have what we, in our mental and physical states, consider a full life, but, in their own capacities.

Bev: Quality of life.

Karen: The quality they can attain, great. They are able to do something to entertain themselves, or make a choice. To say: "I really don't want this today." Great.

Glenn: What do you want to teach these children? What do you hope to accomplish with them?

Marj: My hope is to get those kids in a workshop, maybe that's asking for too much, but that's my hope. And some of those kids could make it, in a really secure workshop.

Karen: If they're able to learn to use a toilet, so that they're able to go onto a bigger and better program, great. You just kind of look at the next step, and say: "Well, if they're able to do this, they have the potential, let's try it." Then they can go on to bigger and better things. Just try to open up as many lives as possible.

Marj: With these kids, self-help skills are the most important. Before you start going into printing you name, or whatever.

Karen: You really have to consider priorities, things that you would teach them. Some things ought to be taught before others. Because without one, the use of the others are useless. Yet, they have these skills. They can go out to the garden with Mom and know what to pull and what not to pull, but they can't keep their diaper dry.

It's just judging. Enhancing the quality of life.

Marj: It's what they can do. That's a good goal for us now. If some child gets lost, and somebody asks: "What's your name?" They recognize the word to get their wallet, and to show their I.D. card.

Relevant and functional goals are identified by the teachers as being important to the handicapped child. Living skills assume a high priority. Independence through the acquisition of life skills and the ability to make choices, however limited the options, are clearly important. With the identification and selection of goals and priorities comes the need to know the child. Without knowing the child, priorities may be incorrect, abilities may be mismatched with tasks. Valerie recognizes that knowing a child allows realistic priorities to be set.

Valerie: I think one of the other things I've noticed. [The] ability to have a continuity from year-to-year. I think that's something that you've been able to develop, Marj. Having a group of kids over an extended period of tome, and [getting to] know them; and then, you know what the next step [for them] should be. I think that it's when you reach mid-year that you understand what you should be doing with them. And the following year, you know what steps should be taken. [Referring to the transcript.] There's a real need for a break from these kids.

Marj: That's right. The kids we're working with now have two new teachers put them back at least a whole year.

Valerie: I mean, not only a break from the kids on a year-to-year basis, but in a sense

a vacation time away from them. So that you can keep the perspective you need to have with them. Because it can be very demanding.

Marj: It is. There was a new teacher . . . . Three kids have fallen back from certain levels because they don't know this person, and they wouldn't work for this person. It takes them at least six weeks before they start to know this person.

There is this one kid, who'd do anything for me, and she wouldn't do anything . . . . And, you know she can do something. She's watching constantly for cues. She knows your face so well. It seemed like she knew, but she didn't.

Bev: What sort of cues did you give her?

Marj: I wasn't working with her in the cognitive area. But, she was working with same/different pictures, and she was always watching. Just a smile, or an expression was a cue to her: "Oh, I got it right." She could get the expression from you without you knowing you were doing it.

You have to get to know that little person before you can get anywhere.

Karen: There are some benefits for switching around, but, there's also some benefits for keeping the same kids two years two years in a row.

Marj: I think so. I've seen improvements that were not expected. These guys, you think they understand so much, and they can't express themselves enough to let you know. You're left guessing. It's quite frustrating too.

Getting to know each child is an important part of teaching for these participants. Also considered is the importance of being aware of the fact that the child also

familiarizes himself/herself with the teacher. The establishment of such a relationship requires a sense of continuity. The need for continuity is further emphasized when the disruptive effect of novelty is considered.

Interpreting Communication Within Behavior

To complicate matters further is the lack of verbal communication on the part of the child. The teacher is left to interpret the observable. Getting to know the child well also allows the teachers to learn to make inferences based upon their experience in interpreting the child. Familiarity plays a large role when the teachers interpret behavior as communicating something. Explanations and motives for a child's behavior, or lack of it, draw the interest of the participants.

At this point in the conversations mine is a relatively minor one in that the other participants are assuming an active role in pursuing topics of importance in teaching handicapped children. Because of this interest, I feel that the topics within this conversation open our consideration of teaching special needs children.

> Marj: Tony knew that, why isn't he doing it today? Just the self-help skills. He can go into the kitchen, and make coffee, stack the dishwasher perfectly. The next day, he's not interested, he throws everything, puts the coffee in the garbage. You know he does it perfectly,

why is he doing it? To get even with you? Is it the behavior?

Glenn: Getting a consistent response from a child is difficult. He's done something a hundred times, but he may go through a phase where he won't do anything.

Marj: That's what gets me. I worked with Tony for two years in a row. This year, I gave him to my partner, I just needed a rest, a break. But Tony, the things he would do for me, he doesn't do any of the things for my partner. That makes me mad. It's like saying I'm not doing my job.

At the last meeting I asked why he was put back a level on a program, he can do that in his sleep, but he wouldn't do it. I went in that same day and went through the test with him. we were done in no time, and no cues, but he wouldn't do things for this person. Now, why?

It's so maddening, because he can do that. Why doesn't he do that with that person? He's quite bright in that area, he knows he can get away with things that that person doesn't know he knows. he has good fine-motor skills.

I was quite shocked at the meeting. I had him at step eleven, and here he is back at step four. The first thing I thought was: "A whole year wasted." He was so used to me working with him, and the first year he had someone new he thought he could get away with it. I don't know.

Bev: Ann was the same. And Jeremy is the same.

Karen: When someone else comes in, behavior is immediately a problem.

Glenn: Why do you think that?

Karen: I think it's when you're working with people, you have to build up a trust.

Valerie: Sometimes I think it's purposefully done. It gets me out of this work. Or, if I do this, then it's going to rouse her gout.

Marj: Or, closing their eyes, and turning their head away, the person gets upset and walks out: "Ha, I did it to them. I'd do it again the next day."

A dependent handicapped child is seen as being able to differentiate between teachers and respond accordingly most of the time. However, the child is also attributed with a consciousness which is evident in defiant acts. It may be, as Karen believes, that the establishment of a trusting relationship is required. Or, it may be, as Marj and Valerie believe, an act of spite or manipulation.

In either case, there is strong need for the participants to interpret a child's action as meaningful. Without a developed system of communication (speech, signing, symbolics), the teachers are left to interpret behavior and assign some meaning to the situation. As a result, a child may be assigned traits consistent with observable behavior. A teacher's understanding of the child plays a major role in being able to accurately interpret a child's action.

Stimulus-Response

Karen: Joanne has not done this behavior for years. When I was in the play area, I started interacting with her, and she immediately would act that behavior. And,

she hasn't done it for years, but she associates me with that behavior.

Bev: The same thing happened when I went to visit Chris at his integrated school. He wasn't there for three years, and he didn't do that. Those people said: "I've never seen him do that." The minute he saw me he did it. So, obviously he associated me with it.

Valerie: We had a similar difficulty in the classroom last year. A student would bite me, but wouldn't do it to anybody else. We changed people to work with him, and for a while he would bother them, or if I went back. And yet I heard that he settled down quite a bit. Whether I was just a stimulus for that or not, I don't know.

Karen: I also thought these kids could pick up on emotions. Like frustration, anger, fear, or "give-me this." And it really affects them. It's just incredible how sensitive they are to fear. I know that I had a really tough time working with Eddie because I was scared of him.

Marj: Once they find out, then you've had it.

Karen: I had no idea of how to handle him. I was fresh off the block, I had just come in from graduating and I was ready to teach the kids how to read. I had an elementary degree and I walked into a special ed. classroom, this kid has a behavior, and he starts throwing a tantrum and attacks me. From then on, I had to struggle to work with this child. He knew, and because I didn't trust him, he would get anxious too. It would set him off every time.

So it's a problem, and you have to know where you're coming from. You have to know what you can do, and know what you can choose from. You need to develop the experience.

The participants explain the aggressive and unwanted behavior in familiar behavioral terms. Stimulus-response is a strong positivistic argument for understanding why a child would bite or scratch his/her teacher. This stimulus-response is a strong association which may continue to be elicited years after the relationship is established. The behavior may even disappear with the absence of the teacher, but reintroduce the teacher, and the behavior will reappear.

Karen, Bev, and Valerie introduce the question of association. It is unclear for them as to whether or not a child may associate a particular teacher with a specific behavior. In these cases a teacher is associated with an aggressive act on the part of the student. The teachers think of the situation in terms of a stimulus-response paradigm.

Sensitivity to emotions or attitudes of others is a characteristic which Karen and Marj see in a dependent handicapped child. A child is believed to be sensitive to the teacher's moods or attitude. A child may also take advantage of a teacher who is scared or who is too demanding thorough an act of aggression or refusal. It is interesting that the teachers see sensitivity towards others as being overly developed when there is little refinement in other receptive or expressive areas of development.

Learning to Interpret the Child

Because the teachers feel the need to interpret the child's behavior and because the teachers assume the majority of the responsibility in identifying, selecting, working towards, and evaluating goas for the child, it is meaningful for the teachers to discuss how they are able to accomplish these tasks. Karen raises the issue of learning how to handle a situation not from her teacher-training, but from encounters with students which gave her the experience to deal with the situations in which she found herself. Allowing the conversation to follow this course allows the teachers to explore what they feel was valuable in allowing them to see the children they teach in such a light.

Valerie: I think in general though, when you're talking about educational background, you come from a university setting, I think that's what university does, is give you some theories to work with. And when you come out and go into special ed., your whole concept of education is broadened severely in the first year, and you have to chuck out everything that you've been taught.

Karen: Spend four years, spend all that money, okay, now we're going to begin learning.

Valerie: They give you the basic building blocks, in the sense of organization and where to look for information, but in the sense of how to deal with the situation you find yourself in, not at all.

Glenn: So, fundamental to teaching the handicapped . . . .

Marj: Experience has a lot to do with it.

Glenn: And developing a sensitivity to people in general?

Karen and Marj: Yes.

Marj: If you want to go into this field, before you start, you have to volunteer or do something to get to know whether you really, really want to spend four years to be involved with the handicapped.

Karen: It's too bad they don't spend the first year doing just this. Then teach you some theory and how to apply it.

Bev: That's what they do in the teacher training colleges I attended, they throw you in the deep-end for six months. And then you find out if you're cut-out to be a teacher.

Marj: Before you spend all that money and four years in university, then to be thrown into a job wondering why did I take this?

Glenn: It seems that you're saying experience is essential in developing good teaching.

Valerie: I think that getting some experience behind you helps when you go take courses at university or whatever program you're involved in. After I worked here one summer before I went back to finish my degree, I found that the courses I was taking, I was able to put things together much more easily. Before it was just a bunch of theories that really didn't make much sense to me, I didn't see how they were all that applicable.

But, after, you can think of a situation and say: "Oh, yes, I remember that situation. This is what/how I could have done to cause a good educational experience to occur here, or to change behavior.

Karen and Valerie, graduates of the University of Alberta, both feel inadequately prepared by courses alone. Bev, having trained in South Africa, believes in the "sink-or-swim" method she experienced. Marj, though not formally trained, has a daughter who is considering entering into the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. Her daughter is unsure that she can cope in a classroom, and Marj may be voicing her concern for her daughter as much as for people with whom she has worked over the years.

Theory based teacher-education, when not directly applied to a teaching situation, appears to prove to be inadequate in preparing teachers for the classroom. Though Karen is an "elementary generalist," and Valerie is a "special education minor," they both feel that the university experience did not fully prepare them for teaching their students. Bev agrees with Karen and Valerie that experience has a major role in teacher-training, a role which is over and above the role of theoretical knowledge.

The consensus appears to be that experience is a key element in teaching special needs children. Experience with children in a group setting is also being formally recognized as an entrance requirement to the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.

Interpretation of the Second Conversation

In Conversation Two, there is an emphasis upon the need for relevant goals. Even though the handicapped child is experiencing and will continue to experience a different quality of life, the teachers focus upon teaching a child life skills which would improve his/her quality of life. With a younger student, there is the possibility that his/her potential will be reached. While with an older student, too much may remain undeveloped.

The child is also seen to be sensitive to those around him/her and can demonstrate different responses to different people. There is the notion of the need for continuity and the problems arising from novelty. Knowledge of a child is necessary in order to teach him/her, and time is required to accomplish the establishment of a working relationship. A child generally reacts poorly to changes, so changes may be eliminated or taught. What appears not to be a problem for the handicapped child is the incredible sensitivity to the emotions and attitudes of others, particularly the teacher. Finally, the participants believe that teacher-education does not prepare for the teaching experience.

Again there is consensus regarding several aspects of "behavior." The teachers see teaching as an observable act, a set of behaviors designed to elicit certain predetermined

responses from the students. The teachers expect learning to be demonstrated, or proven through student behavior. There appears to be a dialectic between "children," "teaching," and "behavior" as each is intertwined with the other.

In this conversation, development continues to be seen as a progression of steps in different areas. These steps may be broken into smaller increments in order to be adapted to meet the particular needs of a child. The goals are identified and priorized by the teacher. Relevant skills ultimately leading towards independence are assessed, priorized, implemented, and evaluated by the teacher. There is a problem with generalization of a skill where a child cannot carry-over learning from one setting or one teacher to another. Novelty is identified as being a problem for the handicapped child.

The teachers work towards helping a handicapped child gain independence. Making the dependent child an independent person is the ultimate goal for the teachers. But, the slow progress of the handicapped child and, in some cases, the enormous deficits which must be overcome by the child are ever present in the realistic estimations the teachers make. There are limitations of both the child and the system.

For the teachers involved in the conversations, knowing a student not only includes awareness of his/her likes or dislikes, but also of how a student is best approached.

Assessments or checklists of skills allow the teacher to scratch the surface of knowing the child. Observation, teaching and reflection, combined with assessments offer the teacher ways in which to develop an empathetic awareness of the child. By developing the knowledge about a child, the teachers are getting to know how things may be adapted to better suit the child.

As the conversations continue, the idea of getting to know the child, of getting a starting point from which to work, evident in the second conversation becomes the focus for the beginning of the third conversation.

Conversation Three

The final conversation seeks to expand further upon the teachers' understandings of children and teaching. In relation to the research question involving "teaching" and "children," the talk included a variety of topics. "Getting to know a child," "generalization," "behavior" as a problem and as an act to be interpreted, "novelty," and "goals" have all been considered as a part of the experience of teaching handicapped children. Many of the topics assume that the teacher has had the opportunity to get to "know" a child. Or, the topics somehow relate themselves to "knowing" a child. But, what of the child with whom the teacher has not yet

taught? Where does he/she start with such a challenge? In this way the previous conversations ask the third conversation to continue the exploration of our understanding by questioning our coming to "know" a child.

Where Does One Begin With a Child?

Glenn: In our previous conversations, we talked of getting to know each child, adapting goals, behavior, the effect of peers, and generalization. You mentioned teacher-training as well. Maybe we could start off today by talking more about the child's potential? How does a teacher know a child's limits? How do you know in September, when you haven't seen a kid before, how do you get a feeling for what they're capable of? Where do you start?

Bev: It takes at least three months to figure-out where you're going to begin.

Karen: Even though you have records from past years, even developing a relationship with a child can take a lot. For example, one child in our room, each year he takes two months before he'll eat consistently for one teacher because it take him time to get used to her. It takes a bit of time for the child to get used to us too, as well as, us getting to know them, even though there's records from their past programs.

Bev: And that's taking into account that every child responds differently to a different teacher. I've seen children behave in a totally different way with another teacher, than they behave with me.

Marj: I see that every day.

Valerie: I think for myself, because the room that I'm involved in is a little more academic in nature, you can do a little more informal types of testing on their basic academic knowledge. You can take them to a level you may think might be too hard for them and see if they can attain that, and then start to drop down from there. Or, you can do the reverse and start working up until they seem to be having difficulty at that particular level, if you're looking at purely academic kinds of things.

But, I think I would agree that it does take a good three months to really understand your class; because a lot of what you do to assess their potential is observational and trial and error. The child may perform one way one day and another the next. So, you need some consistent kind of . . . . Some elongated period of time for some kind of a baseline to be established; where you can make really grounded decisions. You look at last year's records and programs, and that plays a part in where you are going to start to see where their abilities lie. It would definitely help to take some observational time.

Glenn: So, the checklists and the inventories that you'd run in the first part of the year are only a part of getting to know the child?

Bev: The spadework, yes. We've got an example in our room of a boy who came new to the school. It took him a long time to adjust. The report that we got was that he was totally unmotivated, and that he didn't do very much at all. As the months have gone by, we've discovered that he is doing this and he's doing this, and we haven't been working on showing him how to do it, or programming him to do these things, he's just doing them.

Karen: Within two weeks we found two or three motivators to get him to crawl.

Karen: At first we didn't know he was mobile. But, he got up one day and just crawled across the floor. Kinda floored us. Ever since, he's shown us that he's got a lot of skills. To use a microswitch so it's cause-effect ability, to realize that when he touches a switch, it'll cause something to happen.

Bev: Sometimes it makes you wonder if it's worthwhile overestimating a child's potential so that you can almost force them and gear them into situations. It would have been good if we had been able to do things so that we could say: "Hey, we know he can do these things, and let's go for it."

Valerie: I think the checklists that have been put out by the government, act as a basic skeletal kind of thing. I'm thinking of the TMH checklists and the DH checklists that exist within the curriculum itself. From there you use that as a skeletal kind of thing, as a starting point. A lot of times I've found that by using them, it just confirms what I think.

According to the participants, establishing a working relationship with child can take from between six to twelve weeks. The time involved allows the teacher to get to know the child and allows the child to get to know the teacher. Records and information from previous teachers may be helpful in providing useful information about a child. Assessments or checklists may provide further information as well. But, as Valerie points out, a lot of the information comes from observation, as well as from trial and error. Information collected from previous years or from other sources may be outdated or incorrect. This may be especially true given a

recognition of how a child responds differently to a different teacher. Bev recounts how a boy was reported to be unmotivated to complete a task. The child was reported as being non-ambulatory by another school. However, the child managed to roll from one part of the room to another. Bev and Karen were surprised by having a mobile child who was thought to be immobile. He spontaneously demonstrated skills in appropriate situations, apparently without any prior teaching by Bev or Karen. This is a problem of miscalculating a child's ability. Bev wonders if she should be overestimating a child's ability. This example points out the shortcomings of some of the ways in which knowledge about a child is gained. Informal observation and ordinary situations are sometimes the proving grounds for the teacher to get to know a child.

At this point in the conversation the question which surrounds getting to "know" a child is a technical one. Gathering data on the child and plotting the next developmental target becomes the focus of teaching the child with special needs. The teachers' role is one of identifying goals and starting points. But, there is more to "knowing" a child. Though Valerie considers the role of checklists from the curriculum as a way of identifying where to begin with a child, she also hints that there is more to "knowing" a child than tabulating the child's strengths and needs.

Unfortunately, the conversation follows a different train of thought than the one which Valerie has begun. Karen responds to something which Bev mentioned just before Valerie shared her view.

Children Learning from Watching

Karen: Or, you put him in a situation, a non-structured situation, and just set up the room, or whatever, his environment so that he's able to show that if he so chooses. He may one day show us that he can.

Glenn: How do you go about communicating that?

Bev: I think it's just a facilitation. You set the environment up and let him go to it.

Karen: Sometimes even showing him an example, and doing it with another child who is able to do it. Maybe you can get them to show them a way to do it in a skill they're strong in.

Bev: Can you think of an example?

Karen: Maybe even a simple task like we do, is to get one of our students to stack cups, in and out. If we have two working in a group, and he's able to do it, the other one is watching. It is possible that the child will imitate. Maybe not immediately, but after several sessions of doing it.

Marj: There's a lot of examples in our room. You're trying to sit down and go hand-over-hand with them, and the other child will respond to the other child. Stacking, taking things out of something. We'd show him so many times, he just didn't want to do it, he just wasn't interested. One day, he was sitting there

watching the other, and all of a sudden, he was doing it.

But why? After all this hand-over-hand.

Karen: It was peer pressure.

Marj: And the other two are completing a lot. If they work together, they compete so much. One is lower functioning, he tries harder just watching the other child.

Karen: Remember Michelle? She came from this school, still having temper tantrums, and she was put in a school with higher functioning kids that were disciplined to sit at desks and work at tasks. And for a while she still had that behavior, but she watched the other children. Since she's been watching them, she no longer has as many tantrums.

Marj: We had that same incident with Robert. He sees the other kids have to sit in circle, and he's super. He wouldn't sit more than five minutes when we got him. He's been seeing a lot of things happening around him, and that's what he needed. To watch peers.

To watch and play with the other kids, the key is involvement with normal kids. Normalization would get rid of that behavior. To be involved with other people a little more.

Karen believes in motivation as a prime factor in getting a child to learn. This places the power steadfastly in the hands of the teacher. Bev adds to that by mentioning how the situations in her room are engineered to let a child explore and expand his/her abilities. Both believe that preparation of the environment does much to encourage a child to achieve.

Karen and Marj briefly recount how they feel that the child observes his/her peers in order to learn. The behavior problems of two children are considered to have decreased significantly due to the influence of peers. These are interpretations based upon seeing a behavior improve. But, both teachers must only assume that the cause is due to one process. This process involves the child in the observation of peers modelling a behavior, this is then processed internally resulting in an apparent spontaneous demonstration. This leaves the teachers to make yet another inference regarding what they see the child doing.

The Negative Effect of Change

Just as the discussion considers the positive aspects of social implications with children, the negative effects also become the focus of the talk.

> Marj: One example, it's kind of sad to say this; but, Gloria, a new teacher came in, and that child dropped. He's finally back on, where he was when he left last year, he's back on this spring. Like, from last September, from the holidays, that's how long it took to get him back to that level again, because of Gloria. He would just revert. And we know he can do it, he does it on his own. But, performing on-on-one with Gloria, he won't do it. He's dropped back to level four, from level twelve. That's a long way down.
>
> It's sad, it's maddening because you know the child can do it. She just wouldn't do it for that teacher. Maybe

we should change children, switch key kids. We thought of that; but, that's giving in to that kid. She has to work for both of us, not just one of us.

Bev: Right, 'cause next year she might be in a different room.

Marj: Yeah, she might be in a different group altogether. The kids that we have, they do it for one more than for the other. Like Karen [another teacher], Jenny would just work her tail off for her. That's why she progressed so fast, she just wanted to.

Karen: It's funny that you should say that. I can work with one student and give them a variety of different prompts, and a variety of different ways of being very exuberant, or sometimes being very laid back. And, found even though I may do it in a variety of different ways, that child will resist it and play a game of it, and be quite stubborn in the hope that I'll perform and follow through with what I want him to do. But, another person could take over, and he'll do it independently.

Marj: The same like, I've been having a problem with Jan. I ask Jan to do it and she does it in seconds. Gloria sits down and she's nice, and she tries everything; but Jan won't do it. Very stubborn. All her bad behaviors come up. Like: "Ehh, I don't need to do it." Sort of really spoiled behaviors.

You see, any change over in staff, the child falls back so far.

A child may in fact accomplish a task for one teacher in one setting. However, the same child may also choose not to perform the task for another teacher in the same setting. Much is up to the child as to whether or not he/she will work with a teacher. Perhaps it is a matter of a clash of

personalities. Or, it may be that the child does not like the reinforcement given by the teacher. Whatever the reason, it is something that the teacher does not always have in his/her control. A child's negative reaction is not restricted to new teachers. Different environments also impact on the child poorly.

Glenn: Are there times when a child goes to the hospital for an assessment, but the psychologists and people there, and they come back and say that this child won't do anything, but you know they can

Bev and Marj: That happens all the time.

Marj: The same with the external assessment today. We know what John can do. He wouldn't do anything [for the external professionals assessing him].

Karen: It's like pressure, the stress.

Marj: Yeah, he tested him for two or three years. And we know he can . . . . We had this whole thing, 'cause we'd done it ourselves and he had this. He didn't do any of it. All he'd do was throw this stuff around.

Karen: You'd almost think that it would be best that you show the best of what he can do with the person he feels most motivated by. And then, have them assess it by themselves, and then show them the video of what you've done, so that they can see. It's almost like you do need documentation through a video camera and just keep it on tape.

Valerie: Doesn't it get down to children transferring things across environments? Which is a common thing that people see that children will do certain things in one particular environment; but, you change something in the environment, and they won't complete the same task, they're

in a different environment. So, they're learning the task in a particular set of norms, a certain quality of environment. And, for example, you change the instructor on one particular student; that person is now for some reason not doing that particular behavior. I don't know if it's because of motivational reasons or because of whatever reason.

Bev: I know what you're saying. Even the size of the room, the type of lighting in the room, the people, the noise factor. The just being in the hospital, having had to travel there after being here. I've taken kids from here and taken them to the hospital for an assessment. Daryl you might remember.

Marj: And the teacher was with them.

Bev: And, I was with him specifically because they wanted to keep things as consistent as possible.

Marj: Just the environment was enough to set him off.

Bev: And he just went nuts as soon as we went into the hospital. He just changed character.

Marj: I went along with Larry once. Doesn't matter if I would have been there, or not, he was just like on his worst behavior. And, usually when I'm around, he's fine. Like, around here, or when we go out. But at the hospital, he had such a bad experience, he walked in and he wouldn't do anything.

In this portion of the conversation, the talk centers upon two topics: continuity and association. The teachers see a child as being able to perform a skill in one context with one teacher. Change any one of the elements, the equipment, the task, the teacher, the room, furniture and

what-have-you, and the child is unable to cope with the change. This speaks of the need for continuity. The teachers also see the possibility that the site for the external assessment could be associated with a previous bad experience for the child. Remembering the building, the room, or some other factor, the child automatically reverts into a form of escapism. The behavioral background is definitely interpreting why a child may withdraw or regress. The teachers again believe the answer is again in the form of a stimulus-response elicited from the child by the assessment site.

Having considered the effect of new people and different environments, the conversation turns to discuss the effect of new things on the child.

Karen: Remember that little thing you put on his zipper on his coat? That identification thing from McDonald's? And how zooy he got, because he just changed that little thing.

Marj: It was just different. Any change and he just wires up. But, we went out to the car and he stood there. You could see the change of color in his whole body, it was just red. And I can see where the parents of that kid have a hard time to test him. It didn't matter what if I was there or not, I could have stayed back. They never did get a good test.

Bev: Even if they would go and do the testing here, it would be in an environment that they were used to.

Marj: There's no equipment for that. Any change of area. Especially at the hospital, if they had a bad experience

> the first time, you would not get a good testing out of any child. I tried. I even went along, they really begged me to go along; but, she wouldn't do it. I could have stayed back.

Karen recalls the introduction of a small item in a child's tantrum. Novelty is usually seen as a disruptive force in the life of a dependent handicapped child. In another example dealing with novelty, Marj accompanies a child for an assessment thinking that the presence of a familiar person will be enough for the child to accept a new situation. However, the child refuses to cooperate and an assessment does not reflect the child's true ability.

Though I ask a question regarding the sharing of information which is not supported by seeing a child in a formal assessment situation, Valerie reintroduces the problem of generalization or lack of generalization.

> Glenn: Okay, you know that you can't do anything with him at that point; but, you know he's capable of doing something. How can you tell that to the professionals there?
>
> Valerie: The only way I think that can be really verified is either, as you say, is through video-taping; or, very consistent, systematic data taking that will support that statement. But, again that is only showing that that particular individual is only doing that within a particular environment.
>
> But, if it doesn't transfer across to other environments, it's not really really retaining the impact it needs. So, if you're going to teach a particular skill, it's important to make sure you can start to transfer it across environments: from

school, to home, to the bus, to the public place, and camping, wherever they are.

Bev: Generalize everything.

Marj: Generalize. And, that's the main goal in our classroom because we do have a lot of problems with that.

Karen: You need to associate the same task in different environments.

Marj: Yeah.

Karen: Associate the same task with different people. Associate the same task no matter what.

Bev: In the community. Do you integrate with the other normal school children?

Marj: No, that's not what we had in mind. Maybe that helps them carry it over if they can transfer over somewhere else.

Karen: One child we have in our class, we hope will have a similar program when they leave here and go back home. And, we're hoping that if we take a video here, they'll have an idea of what he's capable of. So, once he gets used to his new environment, they can reinstate those tasks.

Generalization is a topic which continues to be a part of our discussion. According to the participants, a handicapped is unable to generalize much of what he/she learns. Direct teaching is necessary for skills to be present in more than one setting or for more than one teacher. Perhaps the same belief in the existence and effect of a stimulus-response paradigm is at work here. The child's response to the introduction of the stimulus must be taught

in different places, with different teachers. Because of the difficulty a special needs child has with novelty, the teachers see continuity as an essential part of the teaching process.

The Problems of Meeting Individual Student Needs

By considering the problems encountered with generalization, the teachers pursue the question of meeting the needs of the child.

Valerie: But, if we all used one system, like Portage, or whatever. It might be so that we don't have somebody who comes in and says: "Well, I'm used to this one." And, since there's such a variety of things in use anyway, why don't we just change it. Then, that child has to adjust to that new kind of programming, new kind of reinforcement, whatever it is. Then, if we had it consistent, we could add a bit of variety through our own personalities. I know that has a lot to do with how well the center functions is because we're so diverse. And, our diversity is great.

Bev: We choose any form of assessment or program we want. If you want to use Portage, that's fine. If you want to use the Total Communication Checklist, that's fine. If you want to use something else, that's fine. And then, it gets so chaotic. The levels of assessment are so different, it becomes unfair. How can you assess a child on a scale of one to ten and another child on a scale of yes or no? I find it confusing.

Valerie: But, in general, I think that most checklists have been made for a particular environment, for a particular group of kids; and they don't always seem to

coincide with the needs of the students you have. Because, there are so many biases that come up in some of these checklists. People think that if you're mentally handicapped, they don't take into consideration the non-verbal, there may be paralysis involved. That there are other modes of communication that could be used.

Bev: Another thing too, is the assessments we use. How can you find one suitable assessment for this particular population? We use at least four or five different assessments that I know of. And, it seems that they are chosen to fit the child, so what do you do?

Valerie: I think that in some ways . . . . I think the thing about schools using an eclectic view of education is, you use what works. So often you can't streamline it to death. I think the thing that's been seen over the years is that it's good as a skeletal kind of thing, as a loose structure to start with. But, it just doesn't seem that you can program, or write into these curriculums, all the needs of the students. Because they're very different. They are very different, each to their own. We were doing assessments with the TMH and DH assessments. We've found that our kids were making higher scores in particular areas, not because they were at a trainable level; but, because the way the checklist was devised, some of the things they were able to do gave them a higher score. There's no way they could do a majority of the things requested of them.

I think the curriculum too will forget to consider whether children have mobility, and some other criteria within the curriculum, when you get down to an assessment level, is really a detriment to them. Because it doesn't really reflect where they are.

Selection of one curriculum guide or one program would support the child's need for consistency even when a teacher is changed. Even with one guideline for all the students Valerie points out modifications sensitive to a child's needs could occur. The role of the teacher is to interpret the curriculum or program according to the needs and abilities of the child, complemented by the strengths he/she possesses as a teacher.

Being bound to one format or one curriculum resource limits the options a teacher has to point where it does not serve the needs of a child with special needs. Valerie notes that even with one curriculum guide as a resource, teachers would interpret it differently and they would "add a bit of variety through [their] own personalities." Bev recognizes the difficulty in providing for the needs of her students with a number of assessment and programming tools. The scales and expectations differ, and she experiences difficulty in keeping a perspective between children or even between different areas of development for one student. Bev and Valerie both consider what will meet the needs of the individual student as the most important thing to remember. Knowing a child's strengths and needs, knowing adaptations in equipment and procedures, all combine to allow a teacher to select the appropriate method and materials to help the student learn.

Interpretation of the Third Conversation

In the third conversation, the participants continue to interpret the actions and lack of actions a child might present to them. Their ability to interpret the child is based on the development of personal relationships between the child and the teacher. The teachers continually emphasize the need to get to know each child and to develop a positive relationship between themselves and the child. A child who performs a task for one teacher will not necessarily perform the same task for another teacher. By getting to know the child, it would be assumed that each teacher would know the capabilities and limits of the child, and encourage the child to work within his/her range.

Continuity between a teacher and a child, could allow a bond to be established which would facilitate the child's acquisition of skills. A new teacher, a different room, or a different item presents the child with a new set of circumstances where he/she may not transfer a skill which he/she is capable of performing. The teachers refer to this as an inability to generalize.

It is difficult to determine a starting point with a child. Previous years' assessments and programs help to determine new goals. But, these records do not indicate how

a child will work for a new teacher or a new room. Again the topic of continuity asserts itself.

Underestimation and overestimation are two techniques which may be used to find the child's level. The educated guesses on the part of the teachers are based upon the information about and observations of a child in a particular context. However, the teacher may not be totally accurate in ascertaining the estimated level of a child.

Another consideration from the third conversation is the teacher's role in facilitating a child's acquisition of skills. This is partially seen as the need for the teacher to engineer the environment for the child. These crafted situations create opportunities for a child to explore and be challenged by his/her surroundings and activities.

Finally, the conversation turns to the need to draw upon more than one source for ideas or guidance. One curriculum or one program of development cannot encompass the diversity within the handicapped population. Based upon their knowledge of the child, the teachers can adapt what they feel is necessary or relevant to the child. The teachers are building a case for the need for flexibility in teaching. The teacher takes his/her intensive knowledge of a child, an awareness of the options of study, a modicum of creativity to inspire a child, and blends these components to adapt his/her teaching to the needs and abilities of the student.

Preliminary Reflections on the Conversations

In the talk of the teachers, there are several themes which appear to recur as continuing topics of conversation. These topics include: behavior, continuity, flexibility in teaching, generalization, knowing a child, novelty, and the need to interpret behavior. Behavior can be measured in small increments to show the slow but steady progress of a child. Children and teachers need time together getting to know each other. Teachers need to be flexible in timing teaching moments and in the content of teaching. The child is seen to experience problems in generalizing a skill to another setting or in the presence of another adult. Novelty is seen as disruptive and difficult for the child to handle. Behavior is seen regardless of the lack of a child's oral communication skill, but behavior as a form of communication requires that the teacher decipher its meaning and intent. These topics point towards the teachers' understandings of "children" and "teaching" as meanings experienced by the participants. The sharing of our understandings has allowed us to place into question the taken-for-granted and the forgotten nuances of the meanings themselves. The topics then point as signs gesturing in the direction of themes which compel and inspire our efforts with special needs children.

Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted topics which allowed the conversations to pursue the research questions of "teaching" and "children." In the next chapter, I will attempt to interpret these dominant themes in the light of my original question about the meaning of "teaching" and "children."

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIONS ON THE CONVERSATIONS

Introduction

The topics within the conversations about teaching special needs students were presented in Chapter Four. In Chapter Five, the themes suggested by the topics of conversation are made clear. These themes represent meanings of "teaching" and "children" for the participants of my study as expressed through the conversations.

My reflections on the conversation are based upon my experience in teaching many of the same students, as well as having similar teacher-education and in-service background as the participants. In this way I believe that I share a sensitivity to the intents of special education teachers. The moments selected to concretize the teachers' ideas form a basis for the following interpretation. The interrogation of the dialogue allows for a better and more complex understanding. Like a basket, the interpretive framework established by the research questions and investigation of the teachers' meanings allows other ideas to be woven through the process of interpreting the talk of the teachers.

My initial questions which revolve around the questions of "children" and "teaching" offer insights into the teachers' understandings. The topics identified in Chapter Four stem from attending to the flow of the conversation. I invite the participants to join me in discussing things which are of importance in the teaching of special needs children. The things of which we speak are identified as topics of interest.

The themes which will be identified in this chapter recall Tesch's (1987) definition, "a major dimension, major aspect, or constituent of the phenomenon studied" (p. 231). By drawing attention to the topics of conversation, we can attune ourselves towards significances in what allows us to speak in the manner we speak. Themes grow from exploring the individual teacher's understanding of teaching special needs children. Themes are attentive to the drawing out significant aspects residing within the speech of the teacher. The themes of each teacher, identified with subtitles, are discussed individually.

Marj

Generally, Marj believes a dependent handicapped child to be reliant upon others. This is not surprising given the descriptive label of "dependent." Beginning with this understanding, she believes that a dependent handicapped child is in need of protection. She focuses on deficits, the lack

of skills, the inability to accomplish things. It may also be based upon behavior, or rather the lack of behavior which imbues the child with a sense of incompetency. "Some of those kids could make it, in a really secure workshop" (Conversation 2, C2). "[I think] that they're going to be needing more help" (Conversation 2, C2).

A Child's Abilities

Marj understands these children in terms of what they lack. Missing are such taken for granted refinements as toilet-training, an ability to communicate, or the conceptual ability to name objects in their world. But, in spite of this she is able to see them as being capable of reading and interpreting her actions. "They know why. They have the smarts to know that you're not happy with them" (Conversation 1, C1). "They seem to know when I come back. They try and be good" (Conversation 1, C1). "Once they find out, then you've had it" (Conversation 2, C2). "We know what John can do. He wouldn't do anything [for the external professionals assessing him]" (Conversation 3, C3).

She sees that the children have the ability to manipulate an adult through misbehavior or acceptable behavior. In one instance, she sees a child as being "very stubborn. All her bad behaviors come up" (C3). Getting a reaction from another person is a skill. Marj sees one child as being able to not

only generate a reaction, but also arrive at a desired outcome, the conclusion of a teaching session, "or, closing their eyes, and turning their head away, the person gets upset and walks out: 'Ha, I did it to them. I'd do it again the next day' " (C2). Such a cause-effect relationship would appear to be incongruous with the ascertained functioning of the child. But, Marj is able to see the so-called helpless child in a better and less helpless state.

Marj sees a specific behavior as being present or absent. From there she can shape the behavior towards the desired goal. Teaching assists the child in attaining the next step which leads one step closer to independence for the dependent handicapped child. Where possible, Marj adapts each step to fall within the reach of a particular child. However, she admits there is a point where the child's ability and the selected goals are incompatible. "In past years there was no way to break it down to smaller steps to adapt to the kids" (C1).

Teaching/Learning

Marj sees teaching as a progression of steps, or rungs of a ladder. The steps of learning lead both ways. If one can progress upwards on a series of steps, then the possibility of falling back several steps exists as well. Marj sees the problem of regression as she talks of a child's

difficulty in maintaining skills after breaks from school. "After summer it's a couple of steps down from where they were" (C1). "One child went back from step eleven to step four, and she's still back there" (C1). "I had him at step eleven, and here he is back at step four" (C2). "He's dropped back to level four, from level twelve" (C3).

Marj relies upon behavior as an indicator of development. She assumes that teaching is a progression of observable steps. Following the technique of task analysis, each step is a goal, with the series of steps providing access to an overall goal. Teaching simply follows the identified steps. Once acquired, the retention of a goal or skill is in jeopardy. Marj feels she is able to see concretely whether or not a child is making progress. "I can see at the start of the year you're on this step, and toward the end of the year they're doing more" (C1). "Right now, I think we have increased some behaviors. We can go fifteen or twenty minutes without a behavior tantrum in a one-on-one program" (C1).

Seeing teaching as leading a child along a series of steps may be comforting and useful in two ways. First, it provides direction. To teach a child to be independent is an awesome task. Steps allow independence to be broken into manageable segments covering specific areas of development. Social skills, cognition, fine motor, gross motor, living-skills, communication, and leisure are some of the identified areas. Further distillation of the individual area reveals

individual skills which are necessary for the child to be independent in a particular area. Second, it allows progress, regardless of the minute increments, to be seen. The gains made by the special needs child are usually accomplished slowly, often making it difficult to notice on a day-to-day basis.

Marj also make reference to the range of a child. This indicates the child's position on a hierarchy of skills. The nature of the hierarchy is similar to that of the ladder. The up and down nature of the ladder sees progress or upward movement as being a positive direction, and regression or downward movement on the ladder as being a negative direction. "But, three lost a few steps, we had to go back a few steps" (C1). "One child went back from step eleven to step four, and she's still back there" (C1). By referring to the range of a child, Marj indicates a position on the ladder at which she sees the child, "you're at this step" (C1). With a position on the ladder identified, the child can be guided to the next rung on the ladder.

But, though the step on which the child stands is identified, the child may skip a step altogether. The child may be able to learn without direct instruction and surprise her with a new skill. Marj is open enough to consider other possibilities about how dependent handicapped children learn. Peer observation and seeing the teacher with other students appears to be enough for one child to acquire a skill.

> He was always listening, and all of a sudden he began to sign without us shaping his hands. Just watching us and signing. Now, he understood everything that we were saying, that the other kids were made to do, he picked it up by himself (C1).
>
> Well, he's started signing all by himself, he's signing better than one of the other, higher functioning kids (C1).

The Child's Awareness

To explain an apparent discrepancy between the child's perceived functioning level with the rise of a new and unexpected phenomenon of sign language, Marj attributes the child with powers of observation, processing and discrimination, and the need to communicate. She uses these powers to explain the inconsistencies which appear. Previously, these attributes had also been thought to have been above the child's ability. The model form which the child learns is assumed to be from observing peers and teachers. "He had a lot of watching and listening going on and we didn't think that he was high enough functioning to do that, he was picking it up from seeing other kids doing it" (C1). "Well, he's started signing all by himself . . . . We never thought he'd be ready for this" (C1). "One day, he was sitting there watching the other [child] and all of a sudden, he was doing it" (C3). "He sees the other kids have to sit in a circle, and he's super. he wouldn't sit more than five minutes when we got him. He's been seeing a lot of things

happening around him, and that's what he needed. To watch peers" (C3).

The child is not the only observer. Marj also appears to focus heavily upon what is observable. Behavior provides her with something tangible upon which she may base her judgments. It is also interesting that given the request for her opinion about dependent handicapped children, Marj immediately responds in terms of behavior. The children in her classroom have behavioral disorders which make behavior a major issue. But, thinking in behavioral terms clearly has implications for the way children are seen and understood. One of the implications is that by turning to a behavior, Marj denies the child's inner life.

Behavior

Marj's reliance upon behavior as a means of seeing improvement is apparent. The metaphor of the ladder is again apparent in her talk. She relies upon the ladder to provide her with goals to work towards. Since behavior can be seen, specific goals can be established. In relation to goals, Marj mentions the steps or levels a child attains or loses: "After summer it's a couple of steps down from where they were" (C1).

By applying task-analysis to a goal, the notion of increments or rungs of the ladder become more apparent. "One child went from step eleven to step four" (C1); "He's dropped

back to level four, from level twelve" (C3). In addition to providing sequentially based skills, goals may also be broken into smaller increments so that the dependent handicapped child, assumed to possess a lesser ability, is able to handle the broken-down task more easily.

The presence of a behavior is to be either refined or eliminated. Refined, as in a skill like sign language, or eliminated, as in an unwanted behavior such as biting. Behavior lets her know how a child is progressing or not progressing towards that goal, the upward or downward movement on the ladder. On the positive side, the presence of a particular behavior is something tangible, something that has a name. It is somehow comforting to know that there is something to be improved, which is open to growth. It is a success to have eliminated a negative behavior. "We can go fifteen or twenty minutes without a behavior tantrum" (C1). On the negative side, behavior is the absence of something, the stubborn unknown, which hides potential. It may also be a form of hopelessness in that it eliminates consideration of a child's potential: "We never put any pressure on him because we never thought he'd be ready for this" (C1).

The resulting assumption of behavior creates a reliance upon behavior as a seeable action which may be measured. This is the application of positivistic thinking to the realm of teaching dependent handicapped children. We are unable to see the internalized process of learning, we are only able to

comment upon whether or not a behavior is observed to be present or absent. If a desired behavior is absent, then we may make false assumptions regarding the ability of the child and underestimate his/her ability, as in the case of the child who apparently learned sign language spontaneously.

Novelty

Complicating matters further is the introduction of new people, routines, surroundings, tasks, or equipment. Novelty is noted as being a distraction to the special needs child. Whether it is as a result of a new teacher, or a change in routine, the introduction of new people or things is an apparent problem. Even moving learned behavior into a different room is a problem. "If some of those kids get two new teachers this year, look out. They like things the same, especially that class, look out" (C1). "The kids we're working with now have two new teachers [it's] put them back at least a whole year" (C2). "There was a new teacher . . . . Three kids have fallen back from certain levels because they don't know this person, and they wouldn't work for this person" (C2). "I worked with Tony for two years in a row. This year, I gave him to my partner, I just needed a rest, a break. But Tony, the things he would do for me, he doesn't do any of the things for my partner" (C2). "He was so used to me working with him, and the first year he had someone new

he thought he could get away with it" (C2). "Gloria, a new teacher came in, and that child dropped" (C3). Just the [different] environment was enough to set him off" (C3). "It was just different. Any change and he just wires up" (C3).

Following the introduction of the new teacher, Marj notes that a child regresses several steps. Even though the teacher may have read the child's file and reports, the absence of a relationship often proves to be an obstacle. "If some of those kids get two new teachers this year, look out. They like things the same, especially that class, look out" (C1). "The kids we're working with now have two new teachers put them back at least a whole year" (C2). "There was a new teacher . . . . Three kids have fallen back from certain levels because they don't know this person, and they wouldn't work for this person" (C2).

The introduction of novelty proves to be a disruptive factor for a dependent handicapped child. New teachers, a change of rooms where a skill is being used, an additional piece of equipment all induce a negative reaction to change. Somewhat related to the theme of novelty is the problem of generalization. Given the obvious difficulty a dependent handicapped child has with new things, situations, or people, Marj believes that the child cannot generalize his/her behavior. Replication of a skill in a new setting or with modifications in the equipment appears to be a serious difficulty. Marj recognizes the difficulty a child

experiences with generalization and she tries to account for this phenomenon by allowing for change. "Generalize. And, that's the main goal in our classroom because we do have a lot of problems with that" (C3). "Maybe that helps them carry it over if they can transfer over to somewhere else" (C3).

The metaphor of the ladder also introduces the possibility that not only may one go up or down by ascending or descending, but falling and perhaps crashing are also feasible. Just as the dependent handicapped child shows an apparent ability to manipulate or establish a basic cause-effect relation between his/her action and that of Marj, the child also demonstrates that he/she is capable of differentiating between teachers. What one child does for Marj is not necessarily what he/she will do for another teacher. "But Tony, the things he would do for me, he doesn't do for my partner" (C2). "He's quite bright in that area, he knows he can get away with things that that person doesn't know he knows" (C2). "He was so used to me working with him, and the first year he had someone new, he thought he could get away with it" (C2).

The time needed to establish a teaching relationship with a student varies. Marj observes, "It takes them at least six weeks before they start to know this person" (C1). It may also be that it would take six weeks to become used to a new environment or piece of equipment. The exact time may vary for the individual child, but it is assumed that it takes the

dependent handicapped child an inordinate amount of time to become acquainted with new things or people.

Just as it takes time for Marj to get to know the child, the child uses his/her time to get to know Marj. But, what the child learns is not always the intended focus of a lesson. Sometimes he/she picks up on the teacher and not the lesson. The student may learn nuances and subtle clues Marj may inadvertently emit, which inform the child about the correctness of a behavior or answer. "She's watching constantly for cues. She knows your face so well" (C2). "Just a smile, or an expression was a cue to her. She could get the expression from you without you knowing you were doing it" (C2).

The Teacher-Student Relationship

What if the teacher has not yet established a relationship with a child? The result may be somewhat less than satisfactory. The child may sense fear or aversion on the part of the teacher, or may find other ways in which to manipulate the teacher. "Once they find out, you've had it" (C2). The child could even become vengeful or work towards continual harassment of the teacher. Marj acknowledges that the dependent handicapped child does indeed possess qualities which go beyond a simple stimulus-response paradigm of the positivistic view. Marj believes her student to be not only

aware of the interaction between them, but also believes the child to be manipulative enough to engineer desired outcomes. The selectivity of the child is an apparent possibility to consider whether it is in a one-on-one session with the teacher, or in a group learning situation. "Or, closing their eyes, and turning their head away, the person gets upset and walks out: 'Ha, I did it to them. I'd do it again the next day' " (C2).

Marj sees a special needs child as experiencing difficulty with change. Just as the child believes that she must develop her knowledge of each child, she believes that a child must develop a knowledge of the teacher. This process forms the basis for trust or mistrust between the two. The established level of trust or mistrust between teacher and student may be seen in the quality of their working relationship. Marj acknowledges that a child amy be very selective about what, how, when, and with whom he/she works.

Earlier, Marj offered an example of a boy who, in spite of being thought to be incapable of acquiring simple sign language, watched the teachers with other students using sign language. No direct teaching was attempted. But sign language was acquired and employed by the boy. Another example is given regarding the effect of peers and the improvement of attending behavior of a boy in circle time. "He sees the other kids have to sit in circle, and he's super"

(C3). "He's been seeing a lot of things happening around him, and that's what he needed. To watch peers" (C3).

Some teachers see an absence of skills typical in this age group of children. However, Marj is able to acknowledge that a special needs child, no matter how physically or mentally delayed, has the ability to learn about people and things. Marj sees that the special needs child has capabilities beyond his/her inability to attend to his/her daily living needs. Embedded in this belief is the selective nature of a child regarding people and things with which he/she will work. It is not so big a step from the belief that a child may be selective in whom, when, and what he/she does, to the belief that a child may be selective in what he/she absorbs. If we are to ascribe a dependent handicapped child with universal characteristics, it must include the positive as well as the negative aspects of human nature.

The child is an incomplete picture and Marj must locate as many pieces as possible. The child's ability and potential is cloaked in mystery. Getting to know each child, the abilities he/she has, and knowing which skills need to be acquired and which skills need refinement are all part of gaining a better understanding. But there is always a doubt as to the accuracy of the educated guess. "These guys, you think they understand so much, and they can't express themselves enough to let you know. You're left guessing" (C1). Marj searches for a certainty of explanation. But,

because of the lack of feedback from the child she can only make assumptions based on the knowledge she possesses of the child.

> Tony knew that, why isn't he doing it today? Just the self-help skills. He can go into the kitchen, and make coffee, stack the dishwasher perfectly. The next day, he's not interested, he throws everything, puts the coffee in the garbage. You know he does it perfectly, why is he doing it? To get even with you? Is it the behavior? (C2)

Again, Marj is left to interpret the actions of a child without further embellishment by the child. She feels Tony knows what he is doing whether he is accomplishing the task or not. She wonders about his reasons for doing or not doing something. But, there is also the nagging doubt for Marj that maybe, just maybe, Tony has not learned from his sessions with her. "It's like saying I'm not doing my job" (C2).

Regardless of the knowledge she possesses about a child, Marj admits that a child may surprise her with a new skill. This seemingly implies that peers, as well as teachers, perform an important function in modelling behavior as a teaching strategy. The peer modelling format supplements her teaching method of providing physical prompts to the student, hand-over-hand manipulation.

> He was always listening, and all of a sudden he began to sign without us shaping his hands. Just watching us and signing. Now, he understood everything that we were saying, that other kids were made to do, he picked it up by himself. he had a lot of watching and listening going on and we didn't think that he was high enough functioning to do that, he was picking it up from seeing other kids doing it (C1).

> We never put any pressure on him because we never thought he'd be ready for this. But just form watching the other kids, and we shape the other kids hands, without helping him, everyday he has a new sign (C1).

Finally, Marj also sees the need for a teacher to take a break from particular students. Consistency and knowing a child is important. But, for the proper outlook about the needs and abilities of a child, the teacher must maintain a balanced perspective between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic development of the child. "That's what gets me. I worked with Tony for two years in a row. This year, I gave him to my partner, I just needed a rest, a break" (C2).

Summary

Though the language and concepts which arise in Marj's talk point towards her seeing teaching in a positivistic light, this is balanced with a warmer understanding of the children with whom she teaches. The metaphor of the ladder is prevalent in the way that she describes her teaching and the children with whom she works. The ladder provides her with rungs which may be broken into component parts or smaller steps. As in task-analysis, an operation may be analyzed into stages which , when tied sequentially, allow completion of the operation. Each step leads towards a larger goal in a specific area of development. Information about the child, observation, and parental input determine the appropriateness

of teacher selected goals. Flexibility and patience are two teacher qualities which are useful for Marj. The approach of using hand-over-hand manipulation is mentioned as a teaching technique. The use of peers as models is a method of teaching which might explain previously unexhibited, and therefore unexpected, skills of a child.

She talks in terms of the behaviors which interfere with learning. Things which are set as goals are also set as specific behaviors for acquisition by the child. Behavior modification accounts for much of Marj's teaching. But, there are times when relying upon benavior is not enough. Marj sees a child do something new, perhaps in a situation that has been experienced by both the student and herself a few dozen times, and is at a loss to explain the appearance of a new behavior, signing. She has not consciously taught the child specific signs, but the child signs.

By noticing the discrepancies between her experience with and understanding of that child, Marj is at a loss for an explanation. Perhaps due to the lack of verbal feedback she feels an added responsibility to explain what the child does and why. In any case, Marj tries to be aware of what a child is experiencing or noticing, placing an interpretation on the events and actions she sees. Like many other things considered, Marj's interpretation is based upon observable behavior.

Karen

Seeing the Child

Karen derives pleasure from teaching special needs children. She sees teaching as being divided into one-on-one and group sessions. She prefers one-on-one teaching sessions because they allow her to see the minute increments that show the child is progressing. Teaching is also a creative outlet for the teacher to create situations for a child to learn.

> I enjoy working with children because . . . . You can deal with a situation one-on-one, and I like working one-on-one with children. When there's a big number of children, it's a different sort of a way of teaching. And to see improvement in something that's so minuscule but, it becomes very important (C1).

"[Do] some kind of directing and setting up of situations. And be creative, the different ways you can motivate kids to try, to teach them, and inspire them to be more active" (C1). "It's a creative outlet with the physical satisfaction of physical contact with kids. It's an emotional one too, when you get really excited that someone accomplishes something that you've been working on for a while" (!).

One-on-one sessions are of a different quality than group sessions. These sessions allow for intensive work in one particular area targeted for development, and it allows the teacher to see a child's progress. Improvements in a child's development offer Karen hope and encouragement. The reverse

may also be true. No improvement or regression may dim hope and be discouraging for her.

In a dyad, Karen can pay more attention to a particular child without as many distractions. Why pay more attention to one child? The simple response is: To see the gains the child makes. These gains may be so small as to go unnoticed in a crowded classroom. By working with one child at a time, Karen is better able to see the child's progress and his/her abilities. The focus upon one child can create problems for the teacher. So much time may be spent dwelling upon a single area of development that the overall perspective of the child may be distorted. The atypical may become accepted as the norm, and standards may have to be rethought and reestablished. "When you see a normal child, it's like seeing a miracle case" (C1).

Karen sees a need to break tasks into component parts in order for a dependent handicapped child to learn. She may see that a special needs child's gains are usually seen in small increments or she may find that the child can only digest segments which are in keeping with his/her ability to learn. Regardless of the rationale, her basic assumption is that small increments of knowledge are fundamental to teaching the dependent handicapped child. "And to see improvements in something so minuscule but, it becomes very important. And when you start seeing progress, it's really encouraging" (C1).

If a dependent handicapped child is to be seen in his/her own right, Karen suggests that each child be recognized as an individual. She identifies a personal trait, laziness, and notices it in a child with whom she works. The assumption may be drawn that if a child is capable of possessing a character flaw, that same child is capable of possessing a positive trait as well. In short, Karen may see the child as a person, complete with his/her own personality, with every individual capable of having the complete spectrum of virtues and shortcomings. "And sometimes the child's personality is the thing that keeps you from realizing it might be a lazy kid" (C1).

Like non-dependent handicapped persons, each child is unique and has his/her own personality. "In our intake room there's such a variety of kids and variety of abilities" (C1). Because of the diversity, it takes time for the teacher to get to know each child. "And it takes so long to get to know a child, it would be nice to have a child for more than a year. And to have the program all year round too" (C1). "I think it's when you're working with people, you have to build up a trust" (C2)>

> Even though you have records from past years, even developing a relationship with that child can take a lot. For example, one child in our room, each year he takes two months before he'll eat consistently for one teacher because it takes him time to get used to her. It takes a bit of time for the child to get used to us too, as well as, us getting to know them, even though there's records from their past programs (C3).

But, like most people, there are things which are unknown in spite of the best efforts to reveal abilities. As Marj has previously found surprises in a child, so too has Karen. Underestimating a child is all too possible. Especially in the absence of any tangible evidence to the contrary. A child may demonstrate a skill previously thought to be out of reach, leaving Karen to re-evaluate how she sees the child. "And you start thinking: Well, maybe they have more intelligence in cognitive areas than we's actually thought" C1). "At first we didn't know he was mobile. But, he got up one day and just crawled across the floor. Kinda floored us" (C3).

Building Upon the Child's Abilities

The metaphor which surfaces in the language Karen uses to describe dependent handicapped children is one of construction. There are strong indications that Karen sees the child as a pliable medium from which something may be shaped. She speaks of a child being moulded and influenced by a teacher. The metaphor of construction can be seen when she speaks of having a "bigger base to work from" (C1); or having to "build up a trust" (C2). In the construction metaphor, adding to a child's skills is seen as a positive contribution. In keeping with the construction metaphor, the child is heavily dependent upon external factors such as motivation and cues. "It seems to be proof enough that they

are more easily influenced and moulded through our programming, to encourage them to develop their independence" (C2). "So, we wonder, if we had influenced the children at a younger age, maybe they would have maintained them a bit more because of the degree of reinforcement" (C2). "Within two weeks we found two or three motivators to get him to crawl" (C3). "Or, if you put him in a situation, a non-structured situation, and just set up the room, or whatever, his environment so that he's able to show that if he so chooses" (C3). "You'd almost think that it would be best that you show the best of what he can do with the person he feels most motivated by" (C3).

External motivation, reinforcement, and programming are behavioral terms which describe Karen's sense of what a special needs child requires. These terms are the materials and methods by which construction upon a child's framework is accomplished. In the construction metaphor, the child is built upon by the teacher. Because the child is unable to complete the construction project by himself/herself, there is a reliance upon others to continue in the construction of a person labelled as dependent handicapped. Karen's role as teacher means that she "engineers" situations for the encouragement of a child's skills. sometimes she prompts the child through in a formal program, at other times she places the child in the inviting environment and watches for a reaction.

Because Karen talks of engineering situations for a child, it is evident that planning is important to her teaching. However, she is also ready to take advantage of the teachable moment to create an opportunity for the child to learn. Flexibility emerges as being necessary in her teaching. "some programs you make up as you go" (C1).

The life of a dependent handicapped child is indeed a life different from our own. Karen believes there to be a different quality of life between a special needs child and ourselves.

> I have a deep concern. I think I hope that these kids will become independent and happy and live out a life as fully as possible. They'll never be able to be have what we, in our mental and physical states, consider a full life, but, in their own capacities (C2).

"The quality they can attain, great. They are able to do something to entertain themselves, or make a choice. To say: "I really don't want this today." Great" (C2). "Just try to open up as many lives as possible" (C2). "It's just judging. Enhancing the quality of life" (C2).

Karen's hope is that her students will become as independent as is possible given the physical, medical, and mental circumstances of each child. Life for them is and will be different than it is or will be for Karen. Perhaps it is inappropriate to compare the qualitative measurement of life for dependent handicapped and non-dependent handicapped in terms of the non-dependent handicapped person's reference

point. So, Karen expects that the children she teachers are happy in their own way.

Aside from encouraging the dependent handicapped child to make basic choices or learn to regulate a part of their biological functions, Karen sees her role as a teacher as selecting what the student might likely need in the future. "You really have to consider priorities, things that you would teach them" (C2). The nature of being with a dependent handicapped child is one of teacher control. The child is unable to complete construction of himself/herself, so the teacher provides direction for the continuation of the project. In this way, the teacher's role is to identify goals for the child to achieve which will lead towards continuation of the construction of a whole and independent child.

> It's such a broad range of things. You have a lot of different areas, and you can have a program for a child in four to five areas. I could have at least three programs for this child in one area alone, and now I have to make my priorities straight because I only have this much time and which one is more important for him? Which one is going to be more effective? (C1)

> If they're able to learn to use a toilet, so that they're able to go onto a bigger and better program, great. You just kind of look at the next step, and say: "Well, if they're able to do this, they have the potential, let's try it." Then they can go on to bigger and better things (C2).

> Some things ought to be taught before others. Because without one, the use of the others are useless. Yet, they have these skills. They can go out to the garden with Mom and know what to pull and what not to pull, but they can't keep their diaper dry (C2).

In keeping with seeing the dependent handicapped child as an unfinished project to be built upon, Karen sees the teacher as being responsible for organizing and implementing activities which would prepare the child for the world. To accomplish this requires her to have an in-depth knowledge of the child, a form of blueprint which shows what must be built to make the child whole. Mediating the priorization of goals are factors such as age, physical impairment, medication limits, behavior, and practices of the parent. "You see a need for them to develop a skill or grasp something but they have only minimal movement, only can move part of their fingers because of their hypertonic muscles form cerebral palsy" (C1). "There's physical limits, there's medication limits, there's environmental limits" (C1). "[Grandma] might be there. Grandma does everything for him" (C1). "There might be a totally different language that's used at home" (C1).

Knowing a child's abilities and limitations allows Karen to adapt goals and teaching strategies to match the child. She sees needs. These are behaviors which are absent or which require refinement. Karen incorporates items from the classroom environment to develop a child's skill. This would appear to support an observation that Karen feels relevant, useable skills are priorities.

By building upon a child's skills, the teacher is the active agent in the teaching/learning process. But, there is

an element of uncertainty regarding the outcome of such painstaking planning. Regardless of the amount of preparation and encouragement, Karen voices her concern about the effectiveness of reinforcement and teaching when she says, "So, we wonder, if we had influenced the children at a younger age, maybe they would have maintained them a bit more because of the degree of reinforcement" (C2). The planning, the nurturing of skills, the verbal, social, and primary reinforcement are, in the end, quite suspect as to their effectiveness. Karen is left to do what she has been taught is important and what she feels is important for the child to learn. Significant gains may not be seen immediately nor even over the course of years. The inability of the child to communicate or demonstrate skills adds to the educational guesses Karen establishes. The time it takes to see development combined with the lack of feedback from the child contribute to her uneasiness. Karen wonders, "Who knows? Even if you had one child and worked on all programs, there is still the question of whether they would still have the skills" (C2).

Generalization

Karen has the least amount of experience with dependent handicapped children compared to the other teachers. Her training is also from a generalist elementary degree program.

Though a brief nurturing metaphor can be found in her language which does not appear in the talk of the other teachers, she has acquired the positivistic language so prevalent in teaching special needs children. In describing what she sees as happening, Karen has learnt to rely upon defining things according to the stimulus-response paradigm. When she explains what is at the root of her understanding, she relies upon the language of nurturing. The concrete is described in positivistic ways, while the abstract is shown through more holistic and perhaps more personally felt terms. There is no denying that the positivist way of explanation employing stimulus-response and association are elements which appear very clearly in her language.

In a positivist sense, the dependent handicapped child is a disadvantaged learner and, as such, requires longer to make connections between stimulus and response. However, Karen, like Marj, recognizes that the learned response does not always transfer to a new environment, people, or materials. "When someone else comes in, behavior is immediately a problem" (C2). "Remember that little thing you put on his zipper on his coat? That identification thing from McDonald's? And how zooy he got, because he just changed that little thing" (C3). "You need to associate the same task in different environments" (C3). "Associate the same task with different people. Associate the same task no matter what" (C3).

The time it takes for a dependent handicapped child to learn something varies. Like most learning, it ranges from being learned almost immediately to a skill acquired over months or years. But, Karen sees a need to teach a dependent handicapped child to generalize, the child will not automatically transfer learning to another situation. Nor is the child capable of adapting easily. In the positivist manner, Karen is identifying elements which might be juggled to balance the "correct" formula for teaching dependent handicapped children.

A child seen from the positivist viewpoint has difficulty with parts of the whole. The language Karen employs compartmentalizes parts of the equation which are examined separately to determine the effect on the child. A part of the pack of generalized skills and behaviors is seen in the differentiated response between two teachers. Even though they are teaching partners and spend equal time with the child, the child may treat one teacher differently than the other.

> I can work with one student and give them a variety of different prompts, and a variety of different ways of being very exuberant, or sometimes being very laid back. And, found even though I may do it in a variety of different ways, that child will resist it and play a game of it, and be quite stubborn in the hope that I'll perform and follow through with what I want him to do. But, another person could take over, and he'll do it independently (C3).

Karen recognizes that the child may perform better for one teacher than another. To reduce the inconsistencies and increase the carry-over of skills, Karen sees sharing of information and continuation of teaching programs as being important. Karen sees the child as needing assistance and consistent approaches for something to carry-over to another setting. By sharing detailed and descriptive information regarding a child, she hopes that the child will retain any advances made with her. But, she does not expect generalization to occur naturally. It must be taught or at least formally structured in order for generalization to occur. "So, once he gets used to his new environment, they can reinstate those tasks" (C3).

The dependent handicapped child must be taught to generalize, otherwise the replication of behavior is unlikely or less likely to occur given the introduction of new or different traits. Formalized methods are instituted in order to provide the dependent handicapped child with the necessary structure to adapt to change. "You need to associate the same task in different environments" (C3). "Associate the same task with different people. Associate the same task no matter what" (C3).

> One child we have in our class, we hope will have a similar program when they leave here and go back home. And, we're hoping that if we take a video here, they'll have an idea of what he's capable of. So, once he gets used to his new environment, they can reinstate those tasks (C3).

There is the existence of an apparent discrepancy. Karen believes the child to be unable to generalize a behavior. But, given her experience with a child she hasn't seen for some time, who sees Karen in a different setting, and who is able to resurrect an apparently forgotten behavior, there is a strong case for the child being able to generalize. Exactly what prompts the child to exhibit the behavior in Karen's presence and not in the presence of another teacher remains unknown.

The Child's Sensitivity to Teacher Emotions

In the course of interpreting the conversation, a teacher-trait Karen believes important is the "poker-face." Behaviorally speaking it is best to appear to remain unchanged by a child's behavior, regardless of the severity or the nature of the behavior. Extinction is a prime weapon in the behaviorist arsenal.

Karen carries this a step further. Earlier, Karen had ascribed the child with a keen awareness of her emotions. She senses that the child picked up on her unconscious signals or she was unable to completely makes her reactions to a child. In either case, she feels that the teacher must be able to cloak his/her emotional reactions. She sees the ability to control emotional responses as important.

> I also thought these kids could pick up on emotions. Like frustration, anger, fear, or 'give-me this.'

> And it really affects them. It's just incredible how sensitive they are to fear. I know that I had a really tough time working with Eddie because I was scared of him (C2).

The implications of this are varied. But what springs immediately to mind is the fact that teachers of the dependent handicapped are attempting to increase the responses of their students. A problem arises when the child is faced with the same intonation of the teacher's voice, the same expression, the same reaction as when something is progressing normally. Certainly, positive behavior is reinforced dramatically to make an impact on the child. But, regardless of the severity of unacceptable behavior a measured negative response is inappropriate on the part of the teacher. The child does not receive a true reflection of the intensity or severity of his/her negative action.

She sees a dependent handicapped child as being sensitive to attitudes and emotions. The only meaning she receives from the student is in the form of behavior. She acknowledges the behavior and seeks to understand why the behavior exists. In this case, the aggressions of Eddie are interpreted as being significant because Karen feels she somehow broadcast her fear to him. She examines his attacks as being sensitive to her wariness of working with him. She then makes a conclusion that a dependent handicapped child possesses an acute ability to sense feelings or reactions.

In another instance, Karen believes that because she felt uneasy being around an aggressive student following an attack, that the child fed off her mood.

> I walked into a special ed. classroom, and this kid has a behavior, and he starts throwing a tantrum and attacks me. From then on, I had to struggle to work with this child. He knew, and because I didn't trust him, he would get anxious too. It would just set him off everytime (C2).

Perhaps she did indeed emit negative body language which the child interpreted correctly or somehow sensed something was wrong. Or, perhaps she provided the child with another form of cue. In any case, she feels very strongly that her presence triggered a negative response in the child. Though she objectifies what the child does, the child does not become an object. She uses the language of behavior modification to make an interpretation of what she sees as happening.

What is not at issue is whether or not the child actually perceived subtle changes in demeanor. What this does show is that the child is seen to learn through a strict stimulus-response paradigm. Presentation of a specific stimulus is enough to elicit a specific response from the child. This might reduce learned behavior on the part of the child to that of simple rote learning or a pattern of association. In Karen's estimation, a dependent handicapped child is capable of learning through the association of a response to a stimulus. The duration of this association is long-lived.

In another instance, Karen recalls how another child managed to eliminate an unspecified behavior after being located to another school. Joanne returned to the school for a visit some time later and was in a common area open to and used by six of the school's eight classrooms. Karen's arrival upon the scene immediately set off a particular reaction in Joanne. Karen interprets this encounter in behavioral terms by remaining neutral in tone to the behavior and in considering herself as a form of stimulus.

> Joanne has not done this behavior for years. When I was in the play area, I started interacting with her, and she immediately would act that behavior. And, she hasn't done it for years, but she associates me with that behavior (C2).

Karen's interpretation of the children with whom she works begins with a strong belief that a child is influenced and moulded by the teacher. This interpretation strongly colors her teaching stance where the focus is on the responsibility of the teacher. Karen sees learned associations formed from the strong link of stimulus-response. Her example of Joanne establishes a possibility that Joanne's behavior is as a result of a pattern triggered by Karen's presence. Karen's responsibility, as architect and as engineer, is to see the connections between links and either build upon the part which is structurally sound or eliminate that which is unsafe.

Summary

The teacher as builder clearly fits within the understanding of construction as being the primary way of teaching dependent handicapped children. There is the belief that a child is dependent upon learning through the opportunities provided by the teacher. One of Karen's objectives in teaching is to motivate and inspire a child. The opportunities provided by the teacher reflect the teacher's knowledge of both the child and teaching strategies. The more the teacher knows about the child or what to do with a child, the more the teacher can do for or with the child.

Karen's identification of goals for a child to work on is accomplished by the gaining knowledge about a child through assessments, checklists, or observations. She accumulates this knowledge and synthesizes it with her understanding of what would be best for the child, taking into account the child's age and various abilities.

Karen is sensitive towards the needs of a dependent handicapped child. But, she also sees that the child is sensitive as well. Even when a child may appear to be functioning in the world at a level which is very isolated from the world and its people, Karen sees a child as being able to see things or feel things emanating from herself and other students.

Karen believes the dependent handicapped child is able to learn from his/her peers. She recalls, "For a while she still had that behavior, but she watched the other children. Since she's been watching them, she no longer has as many tantrums" (C3). But, she also needs to explain what a child does. In explaining what she sees, Karen describes the need to construct, to build upon the incomplete framework of the child. Through positivistic thinking, everything can be explained. Things can be increased or reduced through the introduction of the right element.

The manner in which Karen appears to understand a dependent handicapped child poses a contradiction. On one hand, she sees the child as being externally directed and dependent upon verbal, visual, and manual cues. Reinforcement of approximations and of the actual behavior are also evident. However, she also sees that a child may learn and act independently of her external prompts or reinforcements. The child acts and learns independently from any direction from the teacher. Her understanding of the special needs child is constantly seeking explanations for the discrepancies between her two disparate observations.

Bev

Like Karen, Bev also first mentions how a special needs child impacts upon her personally. She derives a sense of

personal satisfaction from working with a special needs child. Bev's teacher-training and experience prior to this school did not train her for teaching exceptional children, but just the same, her years of experience with dependent handicapped children has allowed her to accumulate the vocabulary and the techniques of behavioral modification.

Qualities of Special Needs Children

Bev taught at the special school and returned to working with non-dependent handicapped children because she was missing something. She describes a dependent handicapped child as being able to give her something which the non-dependent handicapped child does not.

> First, it was a very new and different experience to be exposed to dependent handicapped children. But, I stuck with it for several years and left to teach normal children, and found that I wasn't enjoying the work. I wanted to teach dependent handicapped children. I then questioned why this was so, and realized that I was more fulfilled and rewarded by these children than I was with normal children (C1).

She feels a dependent handicapped child needs and appreciates security, and that he/she is open in his/her relations, bearing no grudges. However, Bev also reminds us that behavioral problems are not restricted to a special needs child, and that many a non-dependent handicapped child may have some degree of behavioral problems.

> I would see dependent handicapped children as appreciating and feeling security more than a normal

> child would. A normal child is many times as antagonistic towards the teacher. These children don't seem to bear grudges, at least not all of them. They don't bear grudges and they don't have hang-ups. They sure give you a run for your money with behavior problems and manipulation, but normal children do that too (C1).

From Bev's language, it is possible to point towards the overprotective nature of seeing dependent handicapped children "as appreciating and feeling security more than a normal child would" (C1). Further, Bev runs the risk of oversimplifying the character of a special needs child by saying that a dependent handicapped child does not generally bear a grudge. Beyond these first implications of the differences between dependent handicapped and non-dependent handicapped children within Bev's language lies a fundamental belief in acknowledging similarities between the two groups. Both can learn to manipulate. Both may use behavior to obtain something or to express their wishes. Again the unstated assumption is that manipulation requires active thought and the ability to process information. Given this, the child can arrive at a solution to achieve a desired result. The special needs child is capable of knowing his/her mind and exerting his/her wishes.

Bev recognizes that the special needs child learns to adapt to different environments, like school. The basis which is of most concern is that the special needs child can and does learn. He/she can adapt to a new environment and new people. Adaptations require learning in one form or another.

If the ability to learn is inherent, then the child is already a capable learner. "For most of them, it's their first experience at school, so they've got to adjust and adapt to a new environment plus some of the things . . . . Programs (C1).

Given that a child is already assumed to be a learner, the apparent competency of the learner opens the question of what is he/she learning? To know the answer or answers to this question, Bev considers the amount of information required in order for her to begin to understand a particular child. The strengths and weaknesses.

Seeing the Whole Child

There are factors which Bev feels must be taken into account when teaching dependent handicapped children. In identifying the mitigating physiological, emotional, sociological, and psychological factors Bev is able to allow for their effects on the child. Further, she feels she is able to adapt her teaching to the appropriate level and feel for the child. Bev feels she cam make modifications in her teaching which take into account the whole child.

> There are three factors: behavior factors, physical factor disability factors, and health or medical instability factors. These three tell you on a given day you are not going to follow through on any particular goal, program, or curriculum setting that you had put out for yourself that day (C1).

"In the public school, if a child is sick, they stay home. And they're not that medically unstable. They're not on medication, that on a given day can make a terrific difference to the programs that you've implemented.

The language of positivism is prevalent in Bev's talk about teaching dependent handicapped children. She speaks of programs, of factors. She is able to identify specific elements which effect teaching the dependent handicapped child and consider how the factors could be altered or allowed for in order to improve her teaching. In keeping with seeing teaching as a project of construction, she says the child's acquisition of a skill is dependent upon being motivated by the way in which she organizes the classroom. She says, "You set the environment up and let him go at it" (C3). But, to create a challenging environment, Bev needs to know the child well.

Knowing the child well is an essential part of exercising an ability to be flexible. Flexibility is a teacher trait which is recognized by Bev and seen in her approach with her students. Flexibility grows from being comfortable with a child's abilities, knowing the child, and being able to modify lessons to better fit the child. It is a process of adapting plans and adapting techniques to suit a child's changing needs. "I also like the fact that there's not a strict and rigid crrc that you have to stick to (C1). "[So] you've got

to work at it when she's not being a behavior problem. So you've got to work on something else (C1).

In order to be flexible, the teacher has to be able to draw upon a store of knowledge about the child and take the time to establish a relationship with the child. Bev notes, "It takes at least three months to figure-out where you're going to begin" (C3). It takes time to develop an understanding about a child. "It takes a full year to even begin to work on programs. It's only now that we're in the swing of things, and it's time to wind up" (C1).

Even with accurate reports from other teachers or other settings, there is the child's reaction to novelty which may change much of the previous assessment. The information from reports on the child may be incomplete, or from a different set of circumstances. The effect of change or novelty may negate whatever the previous teacher had found to be the case.

Flexibility arises in the ability to tell when to ignore a child's protests and when to move onto another strategy or activity. Ignoring behavioral outbursts and providing alternatives to particular teaching sessions are part of the abilities Bev sees teachers as possessing. "He's now standing through circle, so we had to be aggressive in a way. We want you to do this, and not be put off by his behavior" (C1).

Her positivistic language is balanced with a holistic attempt at understanding the experience of the dependent

handicapped child. By incorporating the positivistic examination of the world into her struggle in coming to terms with what her students see or feel, she formulates a way through which she can understand the dependent handicapped children she teaches. Bev uses her empathy to attempt to understand the multiple and possibly overwhelming demands placed upon a child in the taken-for-granted act of eating.

> This child has so many oral-motor difficulties just to get her mouth around the food, and then to place another demand on her brain, to say not only must you use you mouth to keep it in, to use your tongue, your lips to chew, to swallow, and remember all those things, you must also make choices (C1).

Bev demonstrates an awareness of what a child might be feeling in a given situation. She clearly establishes how confusion is possible by identifying the number of demands placed upon the child. She manages to blend the need for the teacher to impose something upon a student with the understanding of what a student might be feeling, or why a particular expectation might be unrealistic for a child. To accomplish this, Bev has obviously a strong foundation of knowledge about the child and his/her particular dependent handicap. She mixes the knowledge of the child with her empathetic response in an attempt to experience what the child experiences. In extending her understanding of how the child might see the situation, Bev is able to better adjust her teaching approach and modify the expectations of the child accordingly.

Teacher Responsibility

There are times when empathy and understanding do little to console a child who does not wish to do something. If a child finds a particular task stressful, there is little Bev can do to make the situation more palatable for the child. At times, the goals established leave no room for adapting to the child's frame of reference. In the best interests of the child, sometimes Bev feels she must be aggressive in her approach; she has to ignore the short-term discomfort on the part of the child in order to achieve a mid-term or long-term objective. "I had to be aggressive sometimes to make her do the things that I wanted her to, just to get through the desensitization" (C1). "We want [him] to do this, and [we will] not be put off by his behavior" (C1).

The teacher assuming responsibility for decision-making and goal-setting is a major feature of seeing teaching dependent handicapped children as a project of construction. The plan is mapped by the teacher. The goals for the student are identified by Bev as being in the child's best interest, even if the student is reluctant in or resistant to attaining the goal. This places the issue of control again in the foreground. But, she sees the power of the teacher as mediated by the need to recognize physical, medical, and behavioral factors which influence the teaching process.

Perhaps because, like a non-dependent handicapped child, a dependent handicapped child's needs vary from child to child, Bev recognizes the need to come to know each child individually. underlying Bev's assumptions about the special needs child is the need for her to know the child in detail. The positivistic view of teaching a special needs child is pervasive in this assumption. Given enough information, a complete picture of the dependent handicapped child could be generated by the data. The complexity of the variables which constitute the child or the process of learning only serve to provide her with more to teach or more strategies which may be incorporated into her teaching.

Accordingly, Bev refers to the need to get to know a child's background, his/her reaction to novelty, his/her preferences, dislikes and the rest. Bev develops an in-depth knowledge about a child, but she also demonstrates a high degree of empathy with the child. She combines her knowledge of a child with a personal interpretation of how a child might feel in a given situation. In the process of gathering knowledge and developing an understanding of how a child might see his/her world, Bev is engaging herself in the building of a relationship. Such an effort takes time. She says, "It takes at least three months to figure-out where you're going to begin" (C3). But it is the teacher who decides where to begin.

The Special Needs Child and Change

In the language Bev uses, she relies upon a construction metaphor. Stages of construction describe the incompleteness of the special needs child. The teacher is the architect responsible for providing a workable blueprint which will "gear them into [learning] situations" (C3). In spite of her reliance upon positivistic language, Bev tries to see the child. Though identification of variable in the equation is positivistic, she recognizes that a dependent handicapped child is an individual. But, she also sees the problems which novelty creates. "And that's taking into account that every child responds differently to a different teacher. I've seen children behave in a totally different way with another teacher, than they behave with me" (C3). "We've got an example in our room of a boy who came new to the school. It took him a long time to adjust" (c#). "Even the size of the room, the type of lighting in the room, the people, the noise factor. The just being in the hospital, having had to travel there after being here" (C3).

Just as there are various mediating factors involved when considering a child's ability, there are mediating factors involved with novelty. Bev remarks, "Even the size of the room, the type of lighting in the room, the people, the noise factor" (C3). The home environment also enters into

consideration. "A totally different culture might be waiting for him at home" (C1).

Bev also recognizes that after a holiday, a child still regresses. Returning to the same setting, with the same teachers helps in regaining lost ground, but the lost ground is formidable. Consistency after a break does provide for support of the child. But, the regression which is evident creates problems which perhaps consistency can only help to a certain degree.

> So, if we can carry on as soon as the summer break is finished and come back to that same room with the same children, and reinstate everything that we've done and built up, it would take three months to get to where they were before the six-week holiday. But, at least there'll be consistency and familiarity (C1).

A child who fails to show a skill in another setting is said to be a problem of generalization. A different environment disrupts the child's world. Testing in another setting does not usually accurately reflect a child's ability. Bev has accompanied a child to the assessment site in an effort to maintain a degree of consistency. "And, I was with him specifically because they wanted to keep things as consistent as possible" (C3). However, this proved an ineffective measure. "And, he just went nuts as soon as we went into the hospital. He just changed character" (C3). Instead of changing the location for formally assessing a child, Bev suggests changing a different variable. "Even if they would go and do the testing here, it would be in an

environment that they were used to" (C3). Having external assessors visit the child in the child's usual setting might provide a chance for a better assessment of a child's skills.

Because of seeing what happens when the child is faced with change of any sort, Bev feels strongly about consistency and taking the time to allow the child to adapt to things. But, this also points towards the inability of the child to generalize things on his/her own. Generalization must be taught to a child. And, the student should be taught to "generalize everything" (C3). The failure of the child to generalize a skill indicates that something has gone wrong in building a positivistic equation of teaching the dependent handicapped child. The positivistic interest in constructing workable models of life from identified elements or traits becomes all the more significant considering its inability to carry-over learned skills to new situations. Though a multiplicity of factors are included, changing the smallest element results in a child's failure to generalize.

The Need for Perspective

Certainly each child is different. But, by following a different assessment tool or sequence of instruction, the scales become too diverse. Comparisons between one child and another become meaningless because of the different focus of skills or the different rating sales used by various tools.

Herein lies Bev's dilemma. She must acknowledge the different needs of each child. She asks, "How can you find one suitable assessment for this particular population? We use at least four or five different assessments that I know of. And, it seems they are chosen to fit the child" (C3). But, when she draws upon whatever appropriate resource is available to assist the child in learning, she runs into the problem of having as many or more checklists or assessments tools as she has children in her room. Her classroom then lacks cohesion. Comparisons are difficult. Perhaps even more difficult is the maintenance of a balanced perspective which allows her to see each child's development in an overall sense. If there are too many measures, Bev sees herself as running the risk of not meeting each child's needs. If she focuses on the small increments the child makes, she may not see change if or when it occurs. If she focuses upon seeing the overall picture, she finds the horizon too hazy because of the multiplicity of the standards.

> We choose any form of assessment or program we want. If you want to use Portage, that's fine. If you want to use the Total Communication Checklist, that's fine. If you want to use something else, that's fine. And then, it gets so chaotic. The level of assessment are so different, it becomes unfair. How can you assess a child on a scale of one to ten and another child on a scale of yes or no? (C3)

Age and the Special Needs Child

A part of finding a perspective from which to view the special needs child is the role in which the age of the child is a factor. The earlier teaching occurs, then the better it is for a special needs child. It appears she supports early intervention because she believes in a developmental theory based on norms in growth and skill development. Bev sees the special needs child as going through the same developmental stages as a non-dependent handicapped child. She sees her job as having to build upon the framework which belongs to all. But, with a dependent handicapped child the building is incomplete and may remain unfinished altogether. As with most construction projects, a schedule is a necessary component of the task. A dependent handicapped child's schedule is seen as having to be completed within the time specified by the plan of development. Otherwise, building upon that particular site will remain incomplete. Timing teaching to coincide with the stages of a child's development is a concern for Bev. "Early intervention is the answer to success with these kids. If they're left, and you start working with them later, they're already passes that stage of development" (C2). Equating the age of the child with a particular stage of development is a common assumption of Bev's. From this relationship between age and the importance of matching teaching to the appropriate stage of the child's development

comes a reliance upon what is observable. As the measurement of an act of learning, behavior again becomes important. Teaching becomes a matter of eliciting responses from a child, even if the introduction of a stimulus is not recognized by the teacher presenting the stimulus.

Stimulus-Response

The positivistic language focusing upon behavior is prevalent in Bev's language. There is a way of seeing the dependent handicapped child in terms of behavior. There is also a reliance upon seeing the classroom as eliciting behavior from a child. She asks about cues. She talks of being a stimulus for a student's behavior. In a positivistic sense, the stimulus-response paradigm provides the strongest learned behavior.

> The same thing happened when I went to visit Chris at his integrated school. He wasn't here for three years, and he didn't do that. Those people said: "I've never seen him do that." The minute he saw me he did it. So, obviously he associated me with it (C2).

Bev attributes Chris' aggression towards her, after a lengthy absence and a different setting, as being caused by habit or by association, a stimulus-response effect. This might suggest that once a special needs child learns, the behavior or skill becomes contingent upon the presentation of a cue. If this is the case, it would suggest that the special

needs child is dependent upon a stimulus, and does not actually process information or signals from the environment. Once a stimulus is acquired, the child has no recourse but to respond in the prescribed manner. However, this is to suggest a special needs child is as in control of himself/herself as one of Pavlov's dogs. The child need not think, merely respond. But, as Bev and others have begun to show, the child is indeed capable of manipulation and of expressing himself/herself/, sometimes in novel ways.

Bev's response to Marj, "What sort of cues did you give her?" (C2). Here, Bev refers to what she feels is the reliance of the child upon unintentional teacher feedback. A teacher must always be on guard against giving a child a cue to act upon. Bev sees the need to be aware of herself when teaching a child. There is a question as to whether or not a child learns a skill or merely learns to read the positive or negative feedback from the teacher.

Summary

Bev, like the others, struggles to understand the children she teaches. Mostly, she relies upon seeing the child from the viewpoint of the positivist. In her langua[illegible], she supports a notion that accounts for as many variables as possible in considering how a dependent handicapped child learns. But, she also has an intuitive grasp of the

limitations of seeing the child in these terms. She senses the need for going beyond the restrictions imposed on understanding a dependent handicapped child according to the isolation of elements or relying upon only concrete manifestations generated by the child.

Valerie

Valerie understands the children in her classroom as being varied individuals who do not necessarily fit neatly into descriptive categories. Each student comes with his/he needs and. it is supposed, with his/her strengths. But, in her language there is a reliance on the positivistic. She speaks of factors, things which can be isolated or reconstituted to form a whole. But, for the dependent handicapped child, the reintegration of the parts results in a very different picture indeed. The factors which Valerie recognizes as making a dependent handicapped child unique are concrete. "People think that if you're mentally dependent handicapped, they don't take into consideration the non-verbal, there may be paralysis involved. That there are other modes of communication that could be used" (C3). Her knowing the child entails knowing all aspects of the child and how any one part would effect the acquisition of skills or demonstration of what the child knows.

Recognizing and Responding to a Child's Needs

Because of the individual differences in mobility, communication ability, and cognitive ability, Valerie believes the goals of teaching should be modified to the child, and not the child to the goals.

> There are things that seem to fit well and there is much that you have to adapt [from the DH crrc] because it doesn't truly meet the needs of your students. At times it's not realistic, the goals that have been set up at present, for the dependent handicapped (C2).

> I think the crrc too will forget to consider whether children have mobility, and some other criteria within the crrc, when you get down to an assessment level, is really a detriment to them. Because it doesn't really reflect where they are (C3).

The modifications are structural in nature. The construction and implementation of an all-encompassing plan allows Valerie to build on the existing structure of the child.

For Valerie, the need to know a child, which is a complex and time-consuming project, is balanced with the need for a break from a child. She states, "There's a real need for a break from these kids" (C2). for her, becoming so engrossed with a child's abilities and needs can be overwhelming. The need to keep a particular child in perspective is a point which she raises. Being with a child and knowing everything possible is fine, but the danger lies in becoming overly centered upon minute changes. A microscopic breakthrough might indeed be a major success for a child. But, as a teacher, Valerie must keep these advances in perspective.

> I mean, not only a break from the kids on a year-to-year basis, but in a sense of a vacation time away form them. So that you can keep the perspective you need to have with them. Because it can be very demanding (C2).

Valerie recognizes the contradictory notions of needing to take the time to develop a well-rounded knowledge of a child over a course of time with the need to take a break from the child. Though developing a knowledge of a child appears to be a consistent theme, Valerie sees the need for a break from a child for two reasons. First, there is the need to maintain a level perspective of where the child stands in relation to the ultimate goal of independence, and where the child stands in regards to developmental levels. Second, there is the need to take a break from a difficult child who tries one's patience. Maintaining calm, even behavioral techniques such as time-out, extinction, or logical consequences requires effort on the part of the teacher. It is difficult to maintain a placid or indifferent facade while a child with a behavioral problem is biting.

Maintaining a balanced perspective of a child's progress is a crucial aspect of her teaching. If Valerie were to allow herself to become too engrossed in the glaring needs of a child, she would run the risk of not being able to see the whole picture. Overexposure to a dependent handicapped child, or the constant attending to the needs of such a child, is stressful and demands much of Valerie. By continuing without

a break from her students, it is quite possible that she could inadvertently overlook a minor improvement. More than likely, she would suffer from teacher burn-out. In any case, it is critical for Valerie to develop and maintain a balanced perspective allowing her to truly act in the best interests of the child.

Uncertainty About Her Interpretation of a Child

Though not openly vocal as the other teachers about concerns regarding stimulus-response, Valerie does ask herself whether or not there is a basis for such a way of thought. "Whether I was a stimulus for that or not, I don't know" (C2). She considers it a possibility, but she is also willing to entertain other explanations. Within her talk there are indications of the pervasiveness with positivistic thought has permeated the language of the special needs classroom. "Stimulus" and "criteria" are prevalent ideas in teaching dependent handicapped children.

When faced with a situation such as dealing with an aggressive child, we are left with the interpretation of an act without any further embellishment by the child. Valerie's training is to dissect the instance. According to the positivistic mode of teaching, her interpretation is then based on her knowledge of the child. In addition, the milieu prior to, during, and following the event are examined for

clues which might act as a "stimulus" for triggering an aggressive behavior. An analysis of victim behavior in the time frame of pre-event, event, and post-event. Reactions or behavior of others during these times. These considerations, plus an attempt to understand what the child may have tried to accomplish by the act of aggression lead us to make an assumption regarding the cause of the attack. In finding a cause, we try to remedy the situation and offer alternatives. Failing that, we turn to modify the behavior and extinguish the aggression. But, without an empathetic and caring attitude towards the child, the resulting interpretations might be inaccurate. The maintenance of a positive perspective is a key in seeing the need for continuity in a teacher-student relationship and in seeing the need for time away from a student.

Concern About the Future of the Handicapped Child

In light of a positivistic understanding, the identification of individual factors which might effect the teaching/learning outcome is important. To this way of thought the age of the child also becomes a factor for Valerie's consideration. The age is a consideration in not only seeing the abilities and the opportunities of the child in the present, but also in terms of looking ahead to what the child might expect, in terms of care and support, in the

future. It is also a case of the ideal versus the reality. In younger students she sees not only opportunity for the child to develop and grow, but also for society and the community to develop and improve the support services required by the special needs students as they become too old to qualify for educational funding or unprovided for by appropriate vocational funding. Meeting a child's needs has a deadline. Because of their progressing age, Valerie feels the children in her room are running out of time to develop skills in an educational setting. A vocational placement is the next rung on the ladder for him/her and the prospects are far from ideal.

> I know when children are younger you are able to look at them and say: I know they have this potential and I can see that they should be able to do this, because I can see my little child do that. I can have some hope for them and teach them to do such-and-such (C2).

> Once they reach their teen years, you really begin to sense a need to teach them something that's really valuable to them. That's going to help them gain independence. I think now, for the population we serve, it's very difficult when you're planning learning experiences to make them so that what they've learned, they'll be able to use after they leave here. Because, after they leave here, there's nothing (C2).

> But, when they have some intellectual ability, and you know they understand. And yet, they're so limited in what they can do. Even what society is willing to accept them. They have the potential, they have the ability to do something; but what that is right now is hard to say. Unless the community-as-a-whole is willing to open-up more to seeing people we service here, as a viable person (C2).

Though she must know her students well in order to be able to meet their needs, she also believes that the ultimate potential of the student is an unknown quality. Further, this potential is mediated by the child's success and by the availability of resources within the community. Valerie feels, "Without supports in the community to help with housekeeping, marketing, daily living kinds of things, getting a child to reach his potential would be hopeless" (c2). It would appear that the ultimate potential Valerie refers to releasing in a child is the attainment independence in the highest degree possible. And, even a modicum of independence for the dependent handicapped child or adult requires community-based support. Regardless of the existing inadequacies of the support systems, Valerie still builds upon the framework of the child where she can add to the existing structure.

Valerie appears frustrated with the opportunities available to her students as they grow. She knows that the child with cerebral palsy confined to wheelchairs have something inside of him/her which is unable to be released. That in itself is something she is willing to work with and work towards. But, when Valerie sees what is available to this child as a lifestyle, it is disheartening. Getting to know the child has meant that Valerie suspects a child may know more than he/she can show, but it is unsubstantiated because of the lack of demonstrations or observable skills.

She sees the untapped potential as a problem of both what is available in the community vocationally or educationally, as well as, what is locked within.

Getting to Know a Child

Knowing, or guessing what is held within a dependent handicapped child is one thing. Proving what lies dormant or at the mercy of one of the many mediating factors is another. Assessing a child's strengths, weaknesses, and priorizing the goals to release as much of the potential within as possible is a time consuming process. Weeks and months are spent getting to know a child well. The time spent also develops the relationship between teacher and student. Valerie acknowledges that a child's performance with her may vary from day-to-day. Further, she concedes that the performance is also variable between teachers. Records from previous teachers are helpful, but do not replace the need to personally get to know a child. Direct observation and interaction cannot be replaced as a relevant and viable source of information about a child.

> Having a group of kids over an extended period of time, and know[ing] them; and then; you know what the next step should be. I think that it's when you reach mid-year that you understand what you should be doing with them. And the following year, you know what steps should be taken (C2).
>
> [It] does take a good three-months to really understand your class; because a lot of what you do to assess their potential is observational and trial

> and error. The child may perform one way one day and another the next. So, you need some consistent kind of . . . . Some elongated period of time for some kind of a baseline to be established; where you can make really grounded decisions. You look at last year's records and programs, and that play a part in where you are going to start to see where their abilities lie. It would definitely help to take some observational time (C3).
>
> From there you use that [the TMH and DH checklists within the DH crrc] as a skeletal kind of thing, as a starting point. A lot of times I've found that by using them, it just confirms what I think (C3).

Being able to know a child's peculiarities and establishing a relationship with him/her is a time-consuming process. Valerie takes into account that the child may perform differently from day-to-day and takes the time to allow for such discrepancies. Information from previous teachers may or may not apply to a child's interaction with Valerie. Because she feels it necessary to allow for a child's adjusting to new teachers or a new setting. What might have been the case in another environment with another teacher, may not hold true in a new environment with Valerie as the teacher. Valerie supports the notion that a child reacts differently to different situations and different people. This notion echoes what the other participants have said regarding the problem encountered in introducing new things, settings, or people.

According to the positivist tradition of measurement, formalized assessments in the form of checklists do have a role. Though checklists may provide Valerie with some new

information, more likely than not they will only provide Valerie with support of what she has already established through her observations and work with a child. But, from where has Valerie's understanding of a child come? Certainly, he comes to know a child from what she sees he/she can or cannot accomplish. But, it is possible that the information gained from a checklist also confirms her intuition or a feeling about a child which cannot be supported through observation or testing.

Observation confirms Valerie's opinions that generalization is a problem. A child is also effected in a negative way by change or the introduction of something new.

> Doesn't it get down to children transferring things across environments? Which is a common thing that people see that children will do certain things in one particular environment; but, you change something in the environment, and they won't complete that same task, they're in a different environment. So, they're learning the task in a particular set of norms, a certain quality of environment (C3).

> But, if it doesn't transfer across to other environments, it's not really really retaining the impact it needs. So, if you're going to teach a particular skill, it's important to make sure you can start to transfer it across environments: from school, to home, to the bus, to the public place, and camping, wherever they are (C3).

Gathering intensive knowledge about each child is only one part of the teaching process. Once Valerie is able to get to know the child, the strengths and needs of the child, she modifies curricula, techniques, and equipment in order to teach the child.

Adapting Teaching to Meet the Needs of the Handicapped Child

Adaptation is an ongoing and conscious part of Valerie's teaching. Valerie's teaching is realistic in the sense that it takes into account the abilities of each student and examines the needs of the child. Ultimately, Valerie cannot change what it takes for someone to be declared independent, but she feels that she can modify things leading to independence so that a dependent handicapped child has at least some chance of succeeding.

> As the kids get older, it [the crrc] doesn't always seem to fit their needs. There are things that seem to fit well and there is much that you have to adapt because it doesn't truly meet the needs of your students. At times it's not realistic, the goals that have been set up at present, for the dependent handicapped (C2).

Valerie sees the confusion which a wide range of approaches and checklists create. She notes the disadvantages of using so many different assessments, checklists, and programs to teach the dependent handicapped.

> But, if we all used one system, like Portage, or whatever. It might be so that we don't have somebody who comes in and says: Well, I'm used to this one. And, since there's such a variety of things in use anyway, why don't we just change it. Then, that child has to adjust to that new kind of programming, new kind or reinforcement, whatever it is. Then, if we had it consistent, we could add a bit of variety through our own personalities. I know that has a lot to do with how well the center functions is because we're so diverse. And, our diversity is great (C3).

Valerie sees not only the diversity in curricula and assessment devices but also in the creativity which each teacher brings with him/her. She sees the teachers themselves as resource for teaching children with special needs. Individual teachers possess individual talents and skills. Personal preferences and experiences add to what they can offer the dependent handicapped child. ON one hand she admits that consistency is necessary, but on the other, she sees the value of exposing the child to a variety of people and methods. Limiting teachers to one method of accomplishing things would tax their creativity. If the goal of such a move were to ensure uniformity in an effort to provide the special needs child with consistency, there would still be the aspect of individual teacher interpretation which would negate the intended effect. Each teacher would be able modify the selected teaching guide and the child would still not receive consistent application or interpretation of a selected goal.

But, if each were to interpret the one guideline document, then where is the difference between this and a diverse selection of guidelines? In the final analysis, Valerie sees that there is a need to keep the individual child's needs as a priority. Because of the necessity for the modification of goals to meet the child's particular needs, the is no one guild which is suitable for all dependent handicapped children. If one becomes restricted to one guideline, the child's best interests may not be served.

Something may be overlooked in another source which might lead to independence or which might allow for the right flexibility of teaching which enables a child to learn. Valerie concludes, "I think the think about schools using an eclectic view of education is, you use what works. So often you can't streamline it to death" (C3).

Generalization

Like the other teachers, Valerie considers the lack of generalization a problem. The introduction of novel or slightly different things, skills, or places prove to be an obstacle to be overcome by the child. The child is seen as incapable of independently generalizing a behavior to a different setting. She sees that each skill or behavior must be taught to the child in each situation in order for the child to be able to perform the same task in a variety of environments.

The problem of the lack of generalization includes varying performances for various teachers. Again, mirroring what has been said by the other participants, Valerie also notices the different effects or responses that one teacher draws from a child. Valerie finds, "[You] change the instructor on one particular student; that person is now for some reason not doing that particular behavior" (C3). The child differentiates between people. What the child will do

in the presence of one teacher or adult, may not be what another teacher or adult will find.

The reason, or reasons, for this phenomenon remain(s) unclear. Motivation given by one teacher might be the cause. Visual cues or feedback could add to the child's response. Verbal or auditory encouragement may be different between the two adults. Even if the same words to elicit the response are used, the intonation or pitch may be different enough to catch a child's attention. Facial expression or other gestures could contribute to the different approaches. Wild earrings or patterned clothing might be distracting the child. Compiling a list of contributing factors is a formidable task indeed.

Summary

Valerie believes in arming the child with relevant skills which increase the amount and extent of independence he/she can enjoy. Target skills become known from knowing what a child can and cannot do. She gains knowledge of a child over time through observation and work, and to a lesser extent, through checklists or assessments. Perhaps most importantly, Valerie recognizes balance between the need to know a child with the need for a break from the child. She also sees the dependent handicapped child as being able to differentiate between adults to the point where they will express

preferences in teachers or activities. But, we are still left to our own interpretations, the correctness of which can only be assumed through our knowledge and understanding of the individual child in a particular environment.

Dominant Themes

For the purposes of this study, "children" and "teaching" have been the two questions which have provided a framework from which to uncover the teachers' understandings of teaching dependent handicapped children. In the consideration of what guides our teaching of dependent handicapped children, there appears to be an emphasis upon the observable and the concrete. This reliance upon the positivist model of seeing the world influences how we, as educators, talk of the dependent handicapped child in the classroom. It effects our approach in teaching and our understanding of the child we teach.

Though all four teachers profess to enjoy working with special needs students, Karen and Bev overtly state this as part of the discourse. For karen and Bev there appears to be a high degree of personal satisfaction offered by working with children, and with dependent handicapped children in particular. Interestingly, though special needs children have been depicted as needing much attention and much assistance, the very same children are able to offer the teachers more

than one would think consistent with their perceived abilities.

Marj feels her students are generally aware of their effect on the teacher, and they generally try to pease the teacher. Bev feels they respond to security and are more open towards the teacher than non-dependent handicapped children. All four participants recognize the need to take time to learn about all facets of the child. They also indicate that even armed with what is thought to be complete knowledge regarding a child, teachers may be surprised by the ability of a child, even though a particular ability was thought to have been out of the child's reach.

For Karen, Bev, and Valerie the importance of the child's age is explicit. The teachers have distinct beliefs regarding the advantages of teaching special needs children as early as possible, or early intervention. A heightened emphasis on skills which increase the possibility of any degree of independence faces the older child. Valerie expresses concerns regarding the lack of support which would enable a teenager or young adult to attempt a modicum of independent living.

There is a consensus among the teachers for the need of a tremendous amount of knowledge about a child. Similarly, because of the demanding nature of teaching special needs children, there is the need for a break from the child. The need for maintaining a balance between knowing a child and

establishing a working relationship with a child with keeping a perspective of the nature and extent of a child's skills emerges as significant. Losing perspective creates an imbalance which does not necessarily prove to contribute to a child's acquisition of skills leading to more independent life skills.

Of course, the need for the teacher to get to know a child is important, the reverse is important, while the teachers get to know the students, the students have the time to get to know the teacher(s). Taking time to get to know each other allows either a sense of trust or mistrust to be formed. The knowledge about each other is probably just as essential in developing the trust between teacher and student of which the participants speak.

Regardless of age, the teacher-talk generally describes children who possess major deficits in many areas. But, even in the face of extremely limiting disabilities, the teachers agree that these children are capable of manipulating others, and are aware of and sensitive to the emotions of the teacher. Judging from the number and clarity of examples given by the participants, it is obvious that the manipulation of others is a common concern. The teachers hint at the child's ability to manipulate through tantrum-like behavior. The teachers also attribute the students with such petty typical negative responses such as spite, revenge, and so forth. Manipulation is mainly described in the form of aggression or tantrums.

Karen and Bev also discuss the idea of habit as influencing a child's behavior. Valerie's example with an unnamed child, Karen's example with Eddie, and Bev's example with Chris consider stimulus-response behavior as one explanation for the behavior of some students.

One theme evolves around the problem encountered with the lack of generalization. Teaching is about assisting a child to learn. In the behavioristic view of special education the assumption is, in order for learning to be said to have occurred, some form of behavior must be seen in evidence. If the learning can only be seen under one set of circumstances, the problem which surfaces is whether or not learning has indeed taken place. Given the limited communication received from the child, the teachers must rely upon what they see or hear. There are no written tests for toothbrushing or handwashing. And if toothbrushing or handwashing can only be seen in the confines of the classroom washroom, under the direction of a specific teacher, then can it be said that the child has learned? Or must the skill be seen at home or in another appropriate setting?

The difficulty encountered with the introduction of novelty is shared by the teachers. Once things change, the child's reaction changes. By introducing the child to a new environment or a new teacher, regression will likely occur. Even if one element is maintained over the course of change,

often it is not enough to make a difference to the behavior of a child.

When the participants talk about children, they often talk of the need to get to know each child. Part of their knowledge about the child is gained by the accumulation of evidence through observation and testing. This body of evidence is then used to identify the position of the child on the ladder of development. Teacher knowledge of the child is a fundamental issue which the teachers are proposing as essential to understanding the child and the teaching of the child. However, to gain knowledge about a child, time must be spent observing and interacting with children individually. Gathering knowledge of him/her through cognitive assessments as well as gathering knowledge of physical, emotional, medical, and personal nature is an ongoing process upon which the teachers have embarked.

Learning as Climbing

By increasing an awareness of the pervasiveness of the positivistic language directing our teaching of special needs children, it is evident that ladders of learning are built. These metaphors, ladders, arrange the information gathered about a child and places him/her on the appropriate rung. The ladders of learning are also separated according to different developmental areas. Areas such as cognition and gross motor

are broken down into segments which are further sub-divided until an appropriate level is reached for the child. These steps are priorized. Upward movement is a positive indicator of growth. Downward movement indicates regression or a decline in learning. Lower rungs contain prerequisite skills, while upper rungs represent the highest level of achievement.

The need for the teacher to know a child is seen in gathering empirical information to assess and place the child on the appropriate ladders. Without knowledge of a child's needs, abilities, or limits there can be no effective goal-setting. Lacking the information necessary for decisions, adaptations to the environment or teaching strategies could not be made in the best interest of the child. "Knowing a child" in this way enables the teachers to predict and prepare for how they think he/she will respond given the step upon which he/she rests.

Teaching as Inferring

There is another side to "knowing a child," a way of "knowing" which the teachers see in inferences from the behavior of a child rather than from verbal communication from a child. It is perhaps the need for the teacher to interpret the actions of a dependent handicapped child which is most significant. The participants observe. They check their perceptions of a child with their co-workers. They compare

the child to others. They explore a series of alternative explanations as to why a child might choose to do something at that particular moment. The teachers are constantly making judgments based upon what is seen.

The teachers automatically bestow inferences on a situation. They "read" and are able to guess about the intentions of a child by a behavior the child exhibits. Sometimes, as in the case of tantrums or aggression, they feel they are given no choice but to treat the behavior first and explain it later. At times the teachers may feel confident that they have made the proper interpretation. But, in the end, they wonder about the accuracy of their interpretation. Could they have failed to account for a small, but critical piece of information? Eventually, they are forced to continue in the absence of any assuring feedback from the child. The reliance upon behavior grows directly from the importance placed on empirical evidence which can be used to tell us about a child. Lacking other reliable channels of communication, behavior is the access by which we can enter the world of the dependent handicapped.

Teaching as Building

The metaphor of construction is pervasive in the language of the teachers. In general terms, every life represents an unfinished project. But, in the case of the dependent

handicapped child, the child requires assistance in completing the construction. In some cases the framework is rickety and barren, where in others the frame is in need of less assistance. In either case, the child cannot complete construction on his/her own. Therefore, the teacher is assigned the task of completing the job according to a set of blueprints which have been developed from a positivistic interest in development.

In some cases the construction must pour a foundation because there appears to be none available. The teacher is constantly trying to make the frame adapt to the blueprint so that order may be re-established. The order is imposed by logical positivism. The builder has only the highest of intentions but the material to be worked with does not readily conform to the plan. Sometimes the plans are modified. Other times, the frame is adapted. The result is that the child is encouraged to grow according to values and norms according to someone else's plan.

Summary and Conclusion

The language used in talking about special needs children is steeped in positivistic language. It influences the way in which we not only talk about the children we teach, it also effects the way in which we wee the children, ourselves, and what we are attempting to achieve with the students. This

chapter acknowledges the extent to which the dominant view of teaching special needs children is present in the classroom. The themes point towards a way past thinking of and teaching dependent handicapped children which places limits on both the children and ourselves. Beyond the positivistic language and way of seeing is the understanding gained from considering the effects of such thinking and going beyond the terms of instrumental reason. Through increasing our awareness and sensitivity to the way in which we approach the child with special needs we may be able to see how we may assist the child in becoming a "developing person" (N.I.M.R., 1981, p. 3).

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, pursuing the questions of "children" and "teaching" through the conversations and subsequent interpretation has identified topics which are important to teaching special needs children. This chapter presents themes which are of significance in making our understanding of handicapped children explicit. The observations and interpretations drawn from conversations with the teachers in one sense is limited to this particular group of teachers, thinking of their particular students, during a specific period of time. But, their experiences and meanings they give them are generalizable in the sense that they likely represent the experiences of others.

The dominant discourse of special education remains steadfastly in the language and implications of positivism. The participants themselves wrestle with the confrontation between the way in which the evidence and prescriptions drawn from those objectivist studies both help and hinder their understanding and practice. These studies provide some

direction, but they are incomplete. "Children" are traditionally talked of and seen as things which may be discussed in terms of behaviors. My study is meant to act as a catalyst so that we may consider the possibilities which exist for seeing handicapped children in a different light. The uncovering of the implications of our present understanding has the possibility of informing practice with the further possibility of making a difference in the way in which we understand handicapped children and our teaching of them. In reconsidering the related literature in light of the interpretations the language of positivism is clearly evident as the dominant way of speaking of teaching handicapped children.

Reflecting on the Dominant Language of Teaching Special Needs Children in the Light of This Study

Our understanding of teaching children with special needs is uncovered in the language we employ to describe the process. The language which is employed to convey our understanding relies heavily upon positivistic notions of seeing the world. The dominant objectivist view sees the teachers as, "acting upon the objectified world, man through work transforms it, in the process of generating empirical analytic and technical understandings which enhance efficiency, certainty and predictability" (Aoki, 1985, p. 12).

The teachers are the active participants, shaping the child's development according to efficient procedures and predictable guidelines. Aoki sees searching for meanings people give in a situation, the "situational interpretive inquiry orientation" (p. 9), as lying beyond the interest in acting upon an objectified world.

The intent of comparing the existing literature on the subject of teaching handicapped children is not to confirm or deny hypotheses based upon positivistic notions. The intent is to show the pervasiveness of the way in which we see and talk about teaching children with special needs. Positivistic research seeks specific answers to questions which are closed. The function of the dominant perspective in research into teaching special needs children is to isolate variables which may be modified or replaced to improve the teaching equation. The language is the language of behaviorism. As these conversations point out, there is still a reliance upon concrete and observable actions to determine what is being taught/learnt. The teachers seek to explain behavior for which the child is accountable. Logic is employed to provide explanations. The teachers need to have motives and causes explained.

But, beyond the positivistic language evident when teachers speak of special needs children is an underlying concern and warmth for each child. The children, though reduced to objects to be acted upon by the language of the

teachers, are seen as more than mere objects. The themes discussed in this chapter point towards an underlying web of concern which supports the teachers in teaching handicapped children.

Teaching

The prevalent view of handicapped children comes from the positivist tradition. Objectivist studies are the most prevalent research base for inquiring into teaching handicapped children. These positivistic studies have tried to identify and evaluate elements which constitute good teaching practices or which reflect something that is measurable in the teaching process. But, what constitutes "good teaching"? In this effort, the objectivist studies have centered upon several aspects of teachers.

Teacher Attributes. Examination of teaching special needs children has been greatly influenced by positivist concerns. Even though scientific method eschews emotional or subjective bias, there is a strong need to explain subjectivity. In order to accomplish this task, subjectivity is assigned a value and a place in the equation of teaching special needs children. This need to account for subjectivity can be seen in a study discussed earlier. Jones' (1969) study sought to tie positive teacher attitude towards the handicapped with improved teaching practices. To accomplish

this he studied the morale of regular and EMR teachers. His findings show no significant difference between the two groups of teachers. He finds that there is no significant variation in morale across groups of teachers. Even if morale is an indicator of teacher attitude towards special needs students, the teachers who agreed to participate in this study did not concern themselves with the level of morale they possessed. The participants in this interpretive study were motivated, caring, and energetic teachers.

From the consideration of teacher attributes we move to a teaching task. It is within the realm of the teacher to use and to modify materials used with handicapped children.

Adaptive Materials. Also evident in the conversations is the belief on the part of the participants that they possess the skills to evaluate instructional materials. By selecting and modifying their methods, materials, and assessments or checklists, the teachers exercise their judgment. This would appear to confirm the suggestion made by Baum (1972) regarding the perception teachers have of their ability to evaluate materials. The teachers in my study are keenly aware of the need to modify equipment, situations, methods, plans, and curricula to meet the needs of the child. Karen says, "You start working with things from around the room" (C1). In the first conversation, Bev recognizes behavior, physical disabilities, and medical factors as mediating her teaching. Marj (C1) also speaks of adapting

steps from a curriculum. Adapting materials and environments to the abilities present or capacities which they hope to encourage in a handicapped child allows the teachers to meet the child's needs. With each child's needs being unique, the teachers are the best judges of modifications which are necessary to allow the child access to a skill or piece of knowledge.

Though teachers see themselves as adaptable and as modifiers of the classroom, they see difficulty in a child's ability to learn. As a result, the teacher sees the need to teach the child to generalize a new skill to another setting or with another teacher. Generalization is a concern and an identified goal of teaching special needs children.

Generalization of Skills. The observation of several of her students having difficulty in transferring skills into different situations finds Karen saying, "You need to associate the same task in different environments" (C3). She continues, "Associate the same task with different people. Associate the same task no matter what" (C3). The need to formally train a child to generalize a skill would appear to be a positivistic assumption based upon the observation of the child's inability to do a task in more than one setting, with more than one teacher. An example of the inability of a child to generalize a skill might include getting a child to put on his coat. A different teacher directing him/her, or a sweater instead of a coat may leave the child unwilling or unable to

perform the task. Teaching the child with different articles of clothing in different, appropriate rooms or situations, guided by alternating teachers who are consistent in their methods and reinforcement, is how one might teach the generalization of a specific behavior. The participants are unanimous in their seeing a lack of generalization of skills being taught students.

However, there is a problem in seeing no generalized behavior on the part of the child. The teachers offer examples of children who are quite capable of carrying a specific behavior to other settings. Karen describes Joanne's reaction to her presence. Bev recalls Chris' aggression towards herself. Valerie has a similar situation with an unnamed student. These are examples which show the ability of the child to transfer a specific, possibly learned behavior to another setting. Or, which also demonstrate that a child is indeed capable of making associations across significant periods of time. The transfer of one behavior to another setting is accomplished. However, the problem is that the behavior is not one that the teacher actively sought to teach.

The focus upon behavior arises from both the language of the teachers, as well as from the way in which they understand a child's ability. Behavior is either seen, or it is absent. This would appear to be a simple enough notion which guides the teaching of the participants. Negative behavior is decreased and positive behavior is increased. But, whatever

is identified as a goal or a way in which a child is described, the focus is upon concrete images of the child. Things must be seen to be believed. If not seen, then the skill must be heard. Sight and sound are the two primary ways in which the development of a special needs child is discussed. Karen provides an example, "And when you start seeing progress, it's really encouraging" (C1). An example from Valerie's talk also supports "seeing."

> I know when children are younger you are able to look at them and say, "I know they have this potential and I can see that they should be able to do this, because I can see my little child do that. (C2)

The talk of the participants is filled with such examples where there is an emphasis upon what is seen. However, with handicapped children sometimes the focus upon what is seen emphasizes what is not there. Attention is drawn to the irregularities of the child, or a child's inability to do something. By emphasizing the behavior which the child is capable of performing, the child's disabilities form the center of concern. What the child is unable to do takes the priority away from what the child can accomplish.

Focusing upon behavior is a positivistic way of validating experience. Behaviors are, by behavioral definition, countable. Something which is countable must be able to be seen or heard. Not only can frequency of a behavior be counted, but also the duration of a behavior may be ascertained. Marj remarks, "Right now, I think we have

increased some behaviors. We can go fifteen to twenty minutes without a behavior tantrum in a one-on-one program" (C1).

Perhaps the focus upon behavior is a result of numerous in-services in behavioral modification strategies held at the school over the years. Perhaps it is due to the way in which behavior modification appears to make teaching handicapped children manageable. Skills may be broken into consecutive steps. Closer and closer approximations may be reinforced. But, most importantly, the teacher is given feedback from which he/she can make some sense. The focus upon behavior is encouraged by the child himself/herself.

In positivistic terms, a handicapped child is seen to learn differently and more slowly than a non-handicapped child. Further, it is assured that the special needs child generally requires formal teaching in order to be able to acquire a skill. But, it is questionable as to how much the child requires structured learning opportunities directing his/her attention and effort towards a particular skill. The unexplained eruptions of a new behavior attributed to incidental teaching or through the observation of peers would appear to place the need for structuring teaching in question. The teachers recognize that a child can, of his/her own volition, learn to stack cups on his/her own. More than one child has been said to learn a new skill from watching peers, or watching a teacher teach another student. Marj is able to offer two examples of children who learn incidentally, through

observing his peers. The first example is about a student named Tony. The second refers to Robert.

> Just watching us and signing. Now, he understood everything that we were saying, that other kids were made to do, he picked it up by himself. He had a lot of watching and listening going on and we didn't think that he was high enough functioning to do that, he was picking it up from seeing other kids doing it. (C1)

> He sees the other kids have to sit in circle, and he's super. He wouldn't sit more than five minutes when we got him. He's been seeing a lot of things happening around him, and that's what he needed. To watch peers. (C3)

Karen recalls Michelle, who also apparently learned how to behave in a more acceptable manner from watching her peers.

> Remember Michelle? She came from this school, still having temper tantrums, and she was put in a school with higher functioning kids that were disciplined to sit at desks and work at tasks. And for a while she still had that behavior, but she watched the other children. Since she's been watching them, the no longer has as many tantrums. (C3)

These examples show how the child is seen to be able to learn from non-structured learning situations. The teachers were not intentionally reinforcing the children's responses. No formal program outlining the increments necessary for skill acquisition were devised. The radical acquisition of a skill by a child remains a thorn in the side of positivism. It must be explained in order to be understood. Thus, the learning of appropriate behavior by a child is mainly attributed to the observation of peers.

In a positive light, the consideration of the unexpected rise of a child's skill points towards the social nature of

learning, and its relation to the social implications of teaching. The child is intrinsically drawn to seek something new to be acquired by himself/herself. The handicapped child is no more tied to social or primary reinforcement than anyone else might be. The strongest motivation comes from within the child himself/herself. Seeing the child pluck a skill from apparently nowhere can be explained in positivistic terms. But, the same instance can also remind us that the child is no mere object to be manipulated. He/she can and does assume the ultimate control over learning.

Reassurance. From the conversations with the teachers in this study, developing a knowledge of a child is integral to any interpretation of his/her actions. The need for the teacher to interpret the actions of a child as meaningful places how they interpret those actions in question. Thoughtful observation and reflection allow the teachers to explore possible reasons for the appearance of a behavior. Through sharing these interpretations with colleagues the teachers can check their estimations for validity. As Marj notes, when a child has shown you a particular skill in the past and refuses to continue that skill under the direction of another teacher, "it's like saying I'm not doing my job" (C2). Because the special needs child is inconsistent with demonstrating his/her skills the teachers need support in both the direction in which they are teaching and in the validity of what they are teaching. Often, there is a need for the

teacher to hear from someone else that he/she is indeed on the right track, or that yes, it is a problem and you're dealing with it. The difficulty of teaching handicapped children is lessened somewhat through the sharing and checking of perceptions. Focusing upon behavior allows entry into the world of the handicapped child, but it is open to diverse interpretations.

Entering into a situation where we are able to teach a handicapped child leads to seeing what is important in the children themselves.

Children

As in the question of teaching, the talk of handicapped children is strongly influenced by the positivistic language used by the teachers. Similarly, there is a noticeable emphasis placed upon objectivist research in the studies considered earlier. Being able to talk of special needs children in this manner is allowed through focusing upon several themes surrounding the teachers' understanding of children.

Attributes. Some traditional objectivist studies of special needs children have examined the effect of physical attributes of a handicapped individual. It was believed that the more handicapped a person appeared, the more it effected the judgment of the teacher and so negatively effected the

quality of interaction between student and teacher. For example, in decontextualizing the handicapped person, the study does not make allowances for the teacher getting to know the student, seeing beyond the child's physical abnormalities. In my study, none of the teachers refers to a child/s physical appearance in a manner in which denotes a decrease in the quality of the teacher-student relationship. None of the participants mentions being effected by any physical abnormality or physical impairment of a child. Instead, they dwell upon the need for getting to know a child. An important part of teaching a group of special needs children is "having a group of kids over an extended period of time, and know[ing] them" (Valerie, C2).

When the participants do speak of a child's physical impairments they do so in terms of considering the effect of the impairment on what the child is able to accomplish. There may be "a need for them to develop a skill to grasp something but they have only minimal movement, only can move part of their fingers because of their hypertonic muscles from cerebral palsy" (Karen, C1). Understanding a child's range of movement or physiological difficulties assists in the teacher's planning.

Life Skills. Schmidt and Nelson's (1969) study referred to in Chapter Two argues for the importance of life skills in the curriculum of the special needs student. The participants in my study support the idea that personal and social

adjustment areas are of prime importance for special needs students. For the participants in my study, "self-help skills are the most important" (Marj, C2). Life skills are almost seen as prerequisites for developing a child's abilities. These living skills are foundations to be built upon. A child is seen as being "able to learn to use a toilet, so that they're able to go on to a bigger and better program" (Karen, C2).

The emphasis on living skills lies in the teachers' concern for the future of the special needs child. At a younger age the skills are basic and there is time to develop the child's abilities. "Early intervention is the key to success with these kids" (Bev, C2). "With younger children you have more time and they're at a more impressionable age" (Karen, C2). When the child is at a younger age, things are more manageable. There is time to work on the child's skills or abilities.

The undeveloped nature of a special needs child's living skills as he/she grows older creates a concern for the child's future. Parents see the inability to master basic living skills as a reason to be concerned about the future (Ferguson, Ferguson, and Jones, 1988; Pivato, 1985; Schaefer, 1982). The teachers also show concern for the older student's future. The teachers are working against time to uncover as much of the child as possible as soon as possible. They believe that

teenagers "have pretty well reached their potential of who they are going to be" (Karen, C2).

Just as there is hope for the younger child with special needs, there is anxiety about the older exceptional child. Valerie remarks, "I'm working to an ideal, I hope that some point in time there will be some kind of workshop setting for them. Some place where they'll be able to go and be able to do something, not just have to sit at home or at a group-home" (C2). The hopeful anticipation held for younger handicapped children is still held for the older student with special needs, but the hope is dulled by the realities open to the student who matures past school age. "My hope is to get those kinds in a workshop, maybe that's asking for too much, but that's my hope" (Marj, C2). The teachers rely upon seeing hope in the child's future. The teachers are attuned to the needs of the special needs child. They show a willingness to "act sensitively and with good sense in [their] everyday life concerns with children" (van Manen, 1984b, p. 9).

Children's Behavior. My study would support the findings of Copeland and Weissbrod (1976) who discovered that teachers are "more likely to react favorably to and nurture any type of child when the child is engaged in desirable play activities" (p. 700). The teachers engaged in the conversations talk more positively about and probably react more positively to a child who is engaged in an appropriate activity. A child with a behavioral problem, though talked

about, was not considered as being a desirable child to teach or be around. A teacher may become hesitant to work with an aggressive child, "I had a really tough time working with Eddie because I was scared of him" (Karen, C2).

Positivist language and behavioral engineering strategies allow the teacher to remove himself/herself from an emotional response to a disruptive or aggressive child. On one hand the adoption of a removed, analytical stance legitimizes seeing the aggressive child as an object to be manipulated in order to increase more desirable actions. Besides implementing a strict behavioral modification program, another positivistic remedy, "Effective Teaching," places the focus upon the teacher and his/her ability to manipulate a child. Proximity and other cues are identified as being effective methods in controlling students. On the other hand, distanciation of the teacher can be beneficial by allowing a breathing space for either or both of the parties to regain his/her composure. In the first conversation Marj suggests time-outs for either the student or the teacher. Pat agrees with her about working on something else with a child while a child is being disruptive or aggressive.

Just as parents may offer unconditional love to their child, teachers can offer unconditional acceptance of the student. The teachers are able to accept the child while acknowledging the negative quality of his/her behavior. Distancing themselves from the behavior of the child through

objectivity, the teachers can also distance the child from his/her behavior. The child is still acceptable, even though his/her aggressive acts are not acceptable. The focus on a child's behavior allows the parent or teacher to still love or accept the child regardless of the child's behavior of the moment. From this evolves the beginnings of understanding of teacher-student relationships.

Teacher-Student Relationships

The participants see the need to see the handicapped child in a pedagogic manner. The care and guiding evident in a pedagogical relationship is essentially a part of teaching children with special needs. These relations between the teacher and student are built upon several themes.

Communication. The lack of communication skills on the part of a special needs child is probably the most important reason for the teachers' apparent reliance upon external behaviors. The child who is unable to communicate through language, either in the form of verbalizations, symbolics, or sign language, is an enigma for the teacher. The child who does not, or who is unable to communicate leaves the teacher guessing as to motives and intents. So, the teacher naturally interprets the only communicative ability left to the child, behavior.

Regardless of whether the behavior is positive or negative, behavior affords the teacher with access to what a child might be thinking. The interpretation of behavior is the primary communicative link established between teacher and student. If a teacher wishes to understand a child, he/she cannot always ask the special needs child. Even if the child does possess language, it may not be well enough developed or the child may not completely understand what is being asked. The result is a focus upon behavior in order to make sense of a child.

In this study the teachers rely heavily upon observable instances. The participants do not say, "I heard John say this," or "Eddie says that he doesn't want to work on identifying colors today." The teachers make inferences from what a child does, or does not do.

"Knowing the Child." Getting to know a child as an individual is one of the strongest messages given by the teachers in this study. The teachers in my study see the necessity for allowing for time to get to know the child's strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and the like. According to Bev, "It takes three months to figure-out where you're going to begin." Though the teachers vary in the exact time needed to come to know a child, they are in agreement that getting to know a child is in terms of months and not in terms of a few weeks.

In one sense, the more a teacher gets to know a child, the more he/she may meet the child's needs. The more factors identified in a special needs child's development, the more comprehensive the understanding of that child. But again, the understanding achieved of the child is based upon an array of factors. The child becomes secondary to the real issue of understanding him/her as a person with a handicap.

In another sense, developing one's knowledge of the child goes beyond gathering information about skills and strengths. Information may be passed along when the child changes teachers. But, Bev observes that, "every child responds differently to a different teacher" (C3). There is something which goes along with getting to know a child which is deeper than simply being able to list bits of information about the child. "Even though you have records from past years, even developing a relationship with that child can take a lot" (Karen, C3). Putting the knowledge and the relationship to work assists the participants in establishing a caring and guiding relationship with their students.

The attempt to uncover the meanings of teaching handicapped children for teachers involved in the project of teaching special needs children has led to an understanding of the complex and difficult nature of the task these teachers face. But, the positivistic approach which is prevalent in teaching children with special needs dwells upon the "actualities." And, in all actuality the handicapped child

is at a disadvantage. The disadvantage which the children live with and which the teachers must circumvent is the ability to communicate through language. The teachers of handicapped children usually face communication difficulties which limit the normal expressive capability of a child, the teachers must rely upon other kinds of communication. Communication from the child is clearly present in a child's behavior. Focusing upon the behavior of a child allows the teacher to interpret the child according to the manifestation of behavior, the context, in which the behavior occurs, ^The pre- and post- behavioral considerations, and the teacher's knowledge of the child. Experience with the child allows the teacher to better interpret the behavior. By "knowing the child" well the teacher is able to consider a better interpretation of what the child might be trying to communicate. Valerie reminds us of "knowing a child" by sensing, "you really begin to sense a need" (C2). By "knowing the child" the teacher is able to establish a possible interpretation through using information about a child, an understanding about his/her needs and abilities, combined with a sensitivity to either an actual, a perceived, or a hypothesized understanding of a child's physical, intellectual, or emotional needs. But, in spite of all of the teachers' sensitivities and expertise they may still be interpreting the child incorrectly.

Living With the Unknown. Our interpretation of the child with a handicap is one which we rely upon as educators to meet the needs of the child. The interpretation also allows us to see the effectiveness of our efforts. but, the interpretation is basically an adult or teacher interpretation. For most of us who have been, or who are involved in teaching special needs children, there is always the realization that perhaps you were wrong about what is in the child's best interest, or in what the child meant or needed at the time. Because the child is not usually in a position to validate an assumption, it is more problematic for the teacher. The teacher assumes, based upon "knowing the child," from taking cues from the child's behavior, or from being attentive to the situational context. Still the teachers are left worrying, "These guys, you think they understand so much, and they can't express themselves enough to let you know. You're left guessing" (Marj, C1). The child may be unable to voice his/her wants, needs, preferences, or opinions. The lack of communicative strategies, or the low quality of feedback offered by the child is a definite hindrance in gaining an understanding of his/her perspective. This leaves the teacher guessing not only in terms of what the child wishes to say, but also about the child's ability to achieve.

Re-Evaluating Our Stance in Teaching Special Needs Children

The participants in my study have shared their thoughts about teaching special needs children. By attending to the way in which they talk about the children they teach, we have been able to uncover themes of significance to teaching children with special needs. Regardless of the positivistic nature of the language used by the teachers to describe the children with whom they work, there is a deep abiding sense of commitment and care for these children on the part of the participants. There is a difference between a parent-son/daughter relationship and a teacher/student relationship (van Manen, 1986). Though both relationships are concerned with the child, the pedagogic interest sees "the child as a whole human being involved in self-formative growth" (p. 17). The need to see the handicapped child pedagogically involves caring about the child. The relationship is also a hopeful guiding towards what is possible through whatever means available.

The relationship between the handicapped child and his/her teacher is based on hope. The teacher hopes that he/she can interpret the child. While the child hopes for the same things. Christopher Nolan in his eloquent biography explains that the disabled child has questions about what will become of him. These questions may not be voiced, but nonetheless the questions exist. He dares to hold out the

hope that he will be taken seriously, that he will be recognized as needing similar things which non-handicapped persons take for granted. He asks to be looked upon and accepted not in spite of his disabilities, but beyond the seeing of disabilities. The disabilities are there. But, so too is the something else we can discover in a child. "A brain-damaged baby cannot ponder why a mother cannot communicate with it, and unless it gains parental love and stimulation it stymies, and thus retardation fulsomely establishes its soul-destroying seabed" (Nolan, 1987, p. 119).

We are unable to satisfactorily describe the child merely in terms of his/her behavior. Our efforts to label and objectify the child fall short of grasping the totality of life. We rely upon continually interpreting the child in each context we find him/her. From these encounters we establish the relationships and the insights to continue the expansion of our understanding of these children. As Heidegger suggests, "Higher than actuality stands possibility" (1977, p. 87). We see the actualities imposed by physical, emotional, and mental disabilities. We see the child struggle with the weight of coping with the handicap(s). And, we are moved to acknowledge that there are possibilities which can reinforce our understandings of the child and ourselves. Within the possibilities which we lay open for the child with special needs are the seeds of hope which guide us in teaching him/her.

REFERENCES

Alberta Education (1981). Student attitudes toward the handicapped. Edmonton, AB: Planning and Research Branch, Alberta Education.

Alberta Education (1983). Review of programs and services for the learning disabled and behaviorally handicapped. Edmonton, AB: Special Educational Services, Alberta Education.

Alberta Teachers' Association (1984). School Act of Alberta. Members' Handbook. Edmonton, AB: Author.

Aloia, G. F. (1975). Effects of physical stigmata and labels on judgments of subnormality by preservice teachers. Mental Retardation, 13(6), 17-21.

Aoki, T. T. (1985). Toward curriculum inquiry in a new key. Occasional Paper No. 2. Edmonton, AB: Department of Secondary Education, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.

Aoki, T. T. (1984). Towards a reconceptualization of curriculum implementation. In D. Hopkins & M. Wideen (Eds.), Alternative perspectives on school improvement (pp. 107-118). Philadelphia, PA: Falmer Press.

Aoki, T.T. (1981). To the concrete itself in studies in education: A response. In T. Aoki (Ed.), Rethinking education: Modes of enquiry in the human sciences (pp. 36-40). Monograph No. 3. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Baum, D. D. (1972). Educational materials: The attitudes of teachers of the mentally retarded toward teacher evaluation of instructional materials. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded, 7(1), 46-50.

Berkeley, H. (1985). Mental retardation as social identity. Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 3, 33-42.

Bower, E. M. (1969). Early identification of emotionally handicapped children in school, second edition. In T. Husen & T. N. Postethwaite (Eds.), The international encyclopedia of education (p. 423). Willowdale, ON: Pergamon Press.

Carden, N. & Robson, C. (1985). Teachers' views on the curriculum for severe learning difficulties. British Journal of Special Education, 12(1), 31-33.

Carri, L. (1985). Inservice teachers' assessed needs in behavioral disorders, mental retardation, and learning disabilities: Are they similar? Exceptional Children, 51, 411-416.

Caroll, C. F. & Reppucci, N. D. (1978). Meanings that professionals attach to labels for children. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 46, 372-374.

Carson, T. R. (1986). Closing the gap between research and practice: Conversation as a mode of doing research. Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 4, 73-85.

Carson, T. R. (1984). Conversations with participants about curriculum implementation. In Understanding situational meanings of curriculum in-service acts: Implementing consulting inservicing (pp. 18-42). Edmonton, AB: Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

Carson, T. R. (1984). A hermeneutic investigation of the meaning of curriculum implementation. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Church, E. J. M. (1980). Special education in Alberta. In M. Csapo & L. Goguen (Eds.), Special education across Canada: Issues and concerns for the '80s (pp. 23-37). Vancouver, BC: Centre for Human Development and Research.

Citizen Advocacy Society of Edmonton (1982). Citizen advocacy presentation guide. Edmonton, AB: Author.

Citizen Advocacy Society of Edmonton (1981). Advocate orientation manual. Edmonton, AB: Author.

Cooke, T. P., Appolloni, T. & Cooke, S. A. (1977). Normal preschool children as behavioral models for retarded peers. Exceptional Children, 43, 531-532.

Copeland, A. P. & Weissbrod, C. S. (1976). Differences in attitudes toward sex-typed behavior of nonretarded and retarded children. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 81, 280-288.

Corman, L. & Gottlieb, J. (1977). Mainstreaming mentally retarded children: A review of research. Arlington: Nero and Associates.

Coulter, W. A. & Morrow, H. W. (1978). Requiring adaptive behavior measurement. Exceptional Children, 45, 133-135.

Diamond, S. (1981). Growing up with parents of a handicapped child: A handicapped person's perspective. In J. L. Paul (Ed.), Understanding and working with parents of children with special needs (pp. 23-50). Toronto, ON: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Ferguson, P. M., Ferguson, D. L., & Jones, D. (1988). Generations of hope: Parental perspectives on the transitions of their children with severe retardation from school to adult life. Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 13, 177-187.

Fimian, M. J. (1983). A comparison of occupational stress correlates as reported by teachers of mentally retarded and nonmentally retarded handicapped students. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded, 18(1), 62-68.

Flynn, R. J. & Nitsch, K. E. (1980). Normalization, social integration and community services. Baltimore, MD: University Park Press.

Foley, J. M. (1979). The effect of labelling and teacher behavior on children's attitudes. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 83, 380-384.

Gaar, B. L. & Plue, W. V. (1983). Separate vs. combined categories for mental retardation and specific learning disabilities. Learning Disability Quarterly, 6, 77-79.

Gadamer, H. G. (1985). Philosophical apprenticeships (R. R. Sullivan, Ed. & Trans.). Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.

Gadamer, H. G. (1984). Truth and method. New York: Crossroad Publishing.

Gadamer, H. G. (1977). Philosophical hermeneutics (D. E. Linge, Ed. & Trans.). Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Gart, S. (1976). Exceptional children: Do you know what retarded means? Instructor, 86, 112-113.

Goddard, H. H. (1912). The Kallikak Family: The Study in the Heredity of Feeblemindedness. New York: MacMillan.

Gottlieb, J. (1974, April). Public, peer, and professional attitudes toward mentally retarded persons. A paper presented at a conference on: The mentally retarded and society: A social science perspective. Niles, MI.

Gottwald, H. (1970). Public awareness about mental retardation. Toronto, ON: Council for Exceptional Children.

Greenbaum, J. J. & Wang, D. D. (1965). A semantic-differential study of the concepts of mental retardation. Journal of General Psychology, 73, 257-272.

Heidegger, M. (1977). Basic Writings, (D. F. Krell, Ed.) New York: Harper and Row.

Heintz, P. (1974). Teacher expectancy for academic achievement of mentally retarded pupils. Mental Retardation, 12(3), 24-27.

Holman, M. J. & Jorgenson, D. E. (1971). A measurement of attitudes of home economics education student teachers toward the mentally retarded. Journal of Home Economics, 63, 533-536.

Hoy, D. C. (1980). Hermeneutics. Social Research, 47, 649-671.

Jacobs, J. (1969). The search for help: A study of the retarded child in the community. New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Jones, R. L. (1974). Student views of special placement and their own special classes: A clarification. Exceptional Children, 41.

Jones, R. L. (1972). Labels and stigma in special education. Exceptional Children, 38, 553-564.

Jones, R. L. (1969). Morale of teachers of mentally retarded children: An exploratory investigation. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded, 4(1), 4-10.

Kearney, R. (1984). A note on the hermeneutics of dialogue. In R. Kearney (Ed.), Dialogues with contemporary continental thinkers (pp. 127-133). Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Kinkaide, P. (1974). Moving home: From Michener Centre to the Edmonton region. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Social Services and Community Health, Services for the Handicapped.

Kliebard, H. M. (1982). Curriculum theory as metaphor. Theory Into Practice, 21(1), 11-27.

Kliebard, H. M. (1975). Metaphorical roots of curriculum design. In W. Pinar (Ed.), Curriculum Theorizing (pp. 84-85). Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing.

Laing, R. D. (1967). The politics of experience and the bird of paradise. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books.

Luijpen, W. A. & Koren, H. J. (1969). A first introduction to existential phenomenology. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

McCarthy, T. (1978). The critical theory of Jurgen Habermas. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.

McEvoy, M. A., Nordquist, V. M. & Cunningham, J. L. (1984). Regular and special education teacher's judgments about mentally retarded children in an integrated setting. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 89, 167-173.

McMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (1984). Research in education--A conceptual introduction. Toronto, ON: Little, Brown & Co.

Mealor, D. J. & Richmond, B. (1980). Adaptive behavior: Teachers and parents disagree. Exceptional Children, 46, 386-389.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1981). Phenomenology of perception (C. Smith, Trans.). New Jersey: The Humanities Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). Signs (R. C. McCleary, Trans.). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Moroney, R. M. (1981). Public social policy: Impact on families with handicapped children. In J. L. Paul (Ed.), Understanding and working with parents of children with special needs (pp. 180-204). Toronto, ON: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

National Institute on Mental Retardation (1977). Orientation manual on mental retardation. Toronto: Author.

Nolan, C. (1987). Under the eye of the clock. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Palmer, R. (1969). Hermeneutics. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Paul, J. L. & Porter, P. B. (1961). Parents of handicapped children. In J. L. Paul (Ed.), Understanding and working with parents of children with special needs (pp. 1-22). Toronto, ON: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Pivato, E. (Ed.). (1984). Different hopes, different dreams. Edmonton, AB: Academic Printing and Publishing.

Ricouer, P. (1982). Hermeneutics and the human sciences (J. Thompson, Ed. and Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schaefer, N. (1982). Does she know she's there? (Updated edition). Don Mills, ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

Schmidt, L. J. & Nelson, C. C. (1969). The affective/cognitive attitude dimension of teachers of educable mentally retarded minors. Exceptional Children, 35, 695-701.

Schutz, A. (1978). Phenomenology and the social sciences. In T. Luchmann (Ed.), Phenomenology and sociology. Markham, ON: Penguin, 119-141.

Schutz, A. (1971). The stranger. In A. Broderson (Ed.), Collected papers II--studies in social theory. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Silverman, H. J. (1980). Phenomenology. Social Research, 47, 704-720.

Skrtic, T. M., Sigler, G. R., & Lazar, A. L. (1974). Attitudes of male and female TMR teachers toward the handicapped. Washington, DC: Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.

Smith, D. (1983). The meaning of children in the lives of adults: A hermeneutic study. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Snyder, L., Appolloni, T. & Cooke, T. (1977). Integrated settings at the early childhood level: The role of non-retarded peers. Exceptional Children, 45.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). The ethnographic interview. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Stilma, L. (1986). Aunt Josie. Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 4, 55-56.

Talwar, K. (1983). Letter to My Son. The Mental Retardation and Learning Disability Bulletin, 11, 2-4.

Taylor, R. L., Warren, S. A., & Slocum, P. R. (1979). Categorizing behavior in terms of severity: Considerations for part two of the adaptive behavior scale. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 83, 411-414.

Telford, C. W., & Sawrey, J. M. (1981). The Exceptional Individual (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Tesch, R. (1987). Emerging themes: The researcher's experience. Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 5, 230-241.

van Manen, M. (1986). The Tone of Teaching. Hong Kong: Scholastic-TAB Publications.

van Manen, M. (1984a). Doing phenomenological research and writing: An introduction. Monograph No. 7. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

van Manen, M. (1984b). Action research as theory of the unique from pedagogic thoughtfulness to pedagogic tactfulness. Occasional Paper No. 32. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

van Manen, M. (1982). Phenomenological pedagogy. Curriculum Inquiry, 12, 283-299.

Walkerdine, V. (1984). Developmental psychology and the child-centred pedagogy: The insertion of Piaget into early education. Changing the subject. New York: Methuen, 153-202.

Weber, S. J. (1986). The nature of interviewing. Phenomenology and Pedagogy, 4, 65-72.

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary. (1977). Springfield, MA: G. & C. Merriam.

Whyte, L. A. (1980). Effectiveness of prescriptive teaching for exceptional children. Edmonton, AB: University of Alberta.

Wolfensberger, W. (1972). Normalization: The principle of normalization in human services. Toronto, ON: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

Wolfensberger, W. & Zauha, H. (1973). Citizen advocacy. Toronto, ON: National Institute on Mental Retardation.

Yewchuk, C. R. (1984). Disability vs. handicap: Six deadly myths. Teaching Atypical Students in Alberta, 10(1), 49-52.